

# The Year in C-SPAN Archives Research

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## President Trump's First Term: The Year in C-SPAN Archives Research, Volume 5

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## President Trump's First Term: The Year in C-SPAN Archives Research, Volume 5

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“For almost 25 years I have watched the C-SPAN Video Library evolve into the nonpareil of data on congressional institutional behavior. Most instructors of the legislative process have utilized the C-SPAN’s material in the classroom with great success. Here, in this volume, Robert X. Browning once again demonstrates the myriad ways scholars can advance conventional wisdom on the U.S. Congress and institutions with the C-SPAN Video Library’s seemingly unlimited data. Debates, hearings, and floor speeches are just a few fascinating resources that are brilliantly used in this volume. These research studies offer several exiting new directions for scholars to consider in the future.”

— *Jonathan S. Morris, Department of Political Science, East Carolina University*

“The value of the C-SPAN Video Library as an incredibly rich research resource shines through in the breadth of analysis and insight on display in this latest collection of studies in the Year in C-SPAN Archives Research series. The range of congressional, presidential, and procedural footage of American political life available in the library is simply unparalleled in its depth and scope. What researchers make of these archives, and the insights they continue to yield, is only limited by their collective imagination and analytical ingenuity. Series editor and archives maestro Robert X. Browning must be commended for his tireless efforts to make these materials accessible to the wider research community.”

— *Erik P. Bucy, Marshall and Sharleen Formby Regents Professor of Strategic Communication, Texas Tech University, coauthor of Image Bite Politics: News and the Visual Framing of Elections*



*PRESIDENT*  
***TRUMP'S***  
***FIRST TERM***

## THE YEAR IN C-SPAN ARCHIVES RESEARCH

Robert X. Browning, Series Editor

The C-SPAN Archives, located adjacent to Purdue University, is the home of the online C-SPAN Video Library, which has copied all of C-SPAN's television content since 1987. Extensive indexing, captioning, and other enhanced online features provide researchers, policy analysts, students, teachers, and public officials with an unparalleled chronological and internally cross-referenced record for deeper study. The Year in C-SPAN Archives Research presents the finest interdisciplinary research utilizing tools of the C-SPAN Video Library. Each volume highlights recent scholarship and comprises leading experts and emerging voices in political science, journalism, psychology, computer science, communication, and a variety of other disciplines. Developed in partnership with the Brian Lamb School of Communication and with support from the C-SPAN Education Foundation, this series is guided by the ideal that all experimental outcomes, including those from our American experiment, can be best improved by directed study driving richer engagement and better understanding.

### Other titles in this series:

*The C-SPAN Archives: An Interdisciplinary Resource for Discovery, Learning, and Engagement*

*Exploring the C-SPAN Archives: Advancing the Research Agenda*

*Advances in Research Using the C-SPAN Archives*

*The Year in C-SPAN Archives Research: Volume 4*

*PRESIDENT*  
***TRUMP'S***  
***FIRST TERM***

THE YEAR IN C-SPAN ARCHIVES RESEARCH  
*Volume 5*

*edited by*  
*Robert X. Browning*

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*Cover:* National Archives Building (Png-Studio/iStock/Getty  
Images Plus via Getty Images)



*To my river friends,  
who provide friendship and support*



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# FOREWORD

With the publication of this fifth collection of essays whose video analysis and data are derived from the C-SPAN Archives, we have the opportunity to once again appreciate and assess the contribution the Archives has made to our understanding of the political process, as well as to appreciate the changes that have occurred over time. As with the creation of the C-SPAN networks themselves, the nation and the scholarly community are indebted to the vision of Brian Lamb. Lamb recognized the potential of archiving C-SPAN programming and the power of making the archive available to the public. He presented his idea to Professor David Berg, the then head of the Department of Communication at Purdue University, who consulted with me, and we agreed that Professor Robert Browning, a specialist on Congress, would be an excellent fit to meet with Lamb and a group of Purdue faculty. At the time, I daresay none of us realized that Lamb's successful recruitment of Browning as a willing collaborator would result in not only the enormous growth and success of the Archives but also a more than 30-year partnership.

The C-SPAN Video Library began within the Purdue University School of Liberal Arts in 1987 under the leadership of Dr. Browning, who sought a way to archive and index the thousands of hours of congressional coverage produced by the network every year. In the early days of the archive, because of the nature of the technology of the time, this meant physically inserting and ejecting each videotape and tagging the contents for future retrieval. Currently, the Video Library records all three C-SPAN networks 7 days a week, 24 hours a day. The digitalization of video recording has dramatically transformed the recording, encoding, retrieval, and distribution processes, with the result that hundreds of thousands of hours of video have been made available to the public and the database

of C-SPAN programming has become an unparalleled chronological resource on Congress and governmental affairs, with more than 250,000 digital hours of recording available. As of this writing, in this year alone more than 35 million videos have been viewed. C-SPAN's achievements have not gone unrecognized. In 2010, following Peabody Awards in 1992 for its "ongoing service" of "providing access to information indispensable to an intelligent citizenry" and in 2000 for the series *American Presidents: Life Portraits*, C-SPAN received a third Peabody Award, this one for the Video Library.

Reviewing the contributions to this volume and the four previous volumes, one cannot help but be impressed by the variety of scholarship included. The volumes feature contributions on discovery, learning, and engagement. Authors from a wide variety of epistemological approaches and disciplines employ the Video Library to explore an extraordinary range of subjects—for example, presidential debates, climate change, gender, judicial appointments, immigration, and crises—in a wide variety of contexts, floor debates, committee hearings, and town halls. And they do so with the full panoply of methodological approaches: traditional discourse analysis, linguistic text analysis, video bite analysis, experiments, framing, and media effects, among others. This latest volume is no exception, and it very nicely illustrates the contribution that the C-SPAN Video Library brings to the analysis of these issues. The linguistic analysis of debate, discussion, and presentation can be and is linked with visual cues, which enables much deeper dialogue about the role of emotion and the impact of video communication. The Archives has already produced much knowledge that would not have been possible without it. As new computational social science and visual data analysis tools are developed and applied to this rich resource, even greater advances in our understanding of government and public policymaking will emerge, and we can anticipate that the C-SPAN Archives will continue not only to provide the base video but also to assist scholars in the exploitation of this remarkable resource.

*Michael Stohl*

*Professor of Communication, Political Science, and Global Studies  
University of California, Santa Barbara*

## PREFACE

In this the fifth volume of *The Year in C-SPAN Archives Research*, we focus on Trump's first year in office. As the C-SPAN Video Library grows and the indexing reaches deeper in the archive, scholars are approaching questions with more sophisticated research tools to explore important questions in political science and communication research. These questions include a wide range of topics from climate change to moral authority rhetoric, to Trump's support among African Americans. In addition to the strongly empirical pieces, there are essay pieces about political debates and rhetoric of judicial nominations that use the C-SPAN Video Library for examples. What unites these studies is that they all use video or data derived from the C-SPAN Video Library.

Stephen Llano's chapter begins the volume with a critical examination of candidate debates. The elements of his analysis consists of Framework, Principle, Vision, and Action. So many critics lament how debates have become empty contests of gamesmanship. Llano concludes instead that these debates have distinct value in political discourse.

A different approach is taken by Farah Latif who looks at "gaslighting" in congressional discourse on climate change. She examines members of the Congressional House Climate Solutions Caucus to see the extent that their rhetoric is designed to confused people on climate change. She is interested in how these contradictions become part of the debate as obfuscation.

While her quantitative research does not support this contention, she illustrates the idea through some quotes from the C-SPAN Video Library. The idea is a worthwhile one to pursue perhaps with a different group of members.

While Block and Haynes note Barack Obama won with strong African American voter support, they are interested in African American support for Trump. They present data on Trump's support and develop a typology to describe African American Trump supporters. Their categories are entrepreneur, iconoclastic, doctrinaire, and complicated. After presenting numerous studies on the 2016 election, they use the C-SPAN Video Library to find anecdotes from each of these categories. It is part of a larger project, but has interesting insights for anyone wanting to understand African American support for Trump.

Jennifer Hoewe and Mohammed Ziny's chapter looks at moral rhetoric of members of Congress just prior to and after Trump's inauguration. In a time-separated design, they hypothesize a change in rhetoric after the president takes office. They describe types of moral rhetoric that they search the Video Library for from Republican and Democratic members. They do not find a difference, but illustrate the type of moral rhetoric they do find. It is an important topic and design that effectively uses the Video Library.

Schmitt and Bergbower also study immigration in the 115th Congress following Trump's election. They look at congressional rhetoric and find that a few culturally conservative Republicans are responsible for a lot of the rhetoric on the Republican side, while many Democrats respond to Trump's initiatives on the Democratic side. They look to districts with strong support for Trump and members of the Freedom Caucus to find support for Trump's immigration policies. Using the Video Library, they coded floor speeches during debate on immigration bills. In their analysis they find that largely Republicans avoided talking about Trump immigration policies.

Joseph Sery uses the Video Library in a different way to study rhetoric, and in particular rhetoric on judicial nominations. He builds on long-standing traditions in communication to argue how these nominations are used by politicians as a "means to construct and signal their ideological commitments to key democratic values for their constituents." He uses the judicial debate, not as legal arguments, but as way that politicians can use to create an ideological divide in the public. He then draws on the C-SPAN Video Library for examples of how the concept of judicial activism is used in the political debate.



Russell, Johnson, and Stewart examine a familiar feature of the Trump presidency. President Trump does not favor solo news conferences. Instead he holds many joint news conferences with foreign leaders. In these news conference there are U.S. and foreign reporters asking questions. This allows the president to be evasive, to take questions from foreign press, and to give nonreplies.

Another look at Trump's rhetoric comes from Cann and Jett. They examine President Trump's speeches on climate change from the C-SPAN Video Library over a three-year time period from 2015 to 2018. Essentially, they examine how President Trump frames climate change. They find a difference in how Trump approaches climate change in his Tweets versus his speeches. The speeches are more policy oriented while the Tweets tend to denigrate climate change.

Lusvardi and Tower look at nonverbal congressional behavior in video clips tweeted out by C-SPAN. They coded for smiles, torso movement, hand gestures, and visual aids such as posters. They find that retweets, their measure of engagement, was driven more by content than nonverbal cues. Since they examined only one session, there were not enough charts to conclusively analyze their engagement.

These studies collectively demonstrate the type of research that can be conducted using the C-SPAN Video Library. Each has a different design and hypotheses. They all draw on C-SPAN videos to make their point. There are many different methods and approaches. Together they give us a picture of the first year of Trump's presidency as seen through analysis from the C-SPAN Video Library.



## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This book contains papers initially presented at the 2018 Center for C-SPAN Scholarship & Engagement conference at Purdue University. That conference could not have happened without the skillful assistance of the managing director of the Center, Connie Doebele. She and her student assistants, Ashlyne Taylor and Mohammed Ziny, put together the brochures, schedules, meals, and all activities of the conference. Marifran Mattson, professor of communication and head of the Brian Lamb School of Communication, was instrumental in the creation of the Center and all of its activities including the research conference. Donna Wireman and Rachel Ravellette, also of the Lamb School, helped with many details as well as with all the printed materials and designs.

Dean David Reingold, the Justin S. Morrill Dean of the College of Liberal Arts, has been supportive of the Center and its research conferences since the onset. The Center operates in the Lamb School within the College of Liberal Arts. Professor Eric Waltenburg, interim head of the Department of Political Science, was also a strong supporter of the Center and the conference.

The C-SPAN Education Foundation supported the research with an award that allowed us to give research stipends to those presenting papers. Brian Lamb, Susan Swain, and Robert Kennedy, all executive officers of C-SPAN and the Foundation, have been ardent supporters of our efforts to enhance the research and education uses of the C-SPAN Archives through the CCSE.

Staff of the C-SPAN Archives, especially Matthew Long, Gary Daugherty, and Martin Swoverland, assisted with the conference activities. Alan Cloutier, the C-SPAN Archives technical manager, provided

assistance to researchers, and takes the ideas for improving the C-SPAN Video Library and implements them skillfully.

The Purdue University Press, through the leadership of Justin Race and the skillful work of Katherine Purple, made this volume a reality as did the very helpful production and editing work of Kelley Kimm.

Thanks always to friends and family, including Andy Buck, who were supportive throughout the process.

*Robert X. Browning, Editor*  
*Winter 2020*

## *PART 1*

# *C-SPAN and Historical Research*

*Edited by Kathryn Cramer Brownell*

On March 19, 1979, the recently elected representative from Tennessee, Albert Gore Jr., took the floor of the House chamber and addressed both his colleagues and a national cable audience. The Cable Satellite Public Affairs Network (C-SPAN) had just launched, bringing television coverage of the House of Representatives to the homes of cable subscribers across the country. As the first representative to appear on C-SPAN, Representative Gore delivered a hopeful speech about how cable television could serve as an antidote to media coverage that overwhelmingly favored the president over Congress. “Television will change this institution just as it has changed the executive branch,” predicted Gore. He anticipated that the “good will outweigh the bad” because the “solution for the lack of confidence in government . . . is more open government at all levels.”<sup>1</sup>

He and other supporters of C-SPAN agreed that a central problem in American political life stemmed from the narrow coverage of political events that appeared on network broadcast television. With less than an hour each day dedicated to public affairs, the network news programs determined what events counted as “news” and how such stories were framed and packaged for national audiences. As one telecommunications policy maker from the Nixon administration noted, television networks harnessed a tremendous amount of power because of their “ability to control the flow of information and of ideas to the people” (Brownell, 2017). Activists on the Left and the Right and politicians from both parties could all agree on one thing by the late 1970s: a new approach to television that could provide more comprehensive media coverage of the news was needed (Gitlin, 1980; Hemmer, 2016).

Scholars have debated the ways that the 24/7 news cycle that C-SPAN helped to spawn has shaped politics. It has expanded civic debate and participation while also elevating the place of performative media politics in American government in ways that have brought new challenges to democratic governance (Brownell, 2015; Smith, 2012). But the range and depth of the events that C-SPAN has since captured—from congressional proceedings and committee hearings to campaign stops and partisan gatherings—have created a wealth of resources for scholars. By studying material from the C-SPAN Video Library, historians, political scientists, and communication scholars can follow in the path forged by C-SPAN programming innovations. Notably, they can study people, movements, policies, and ideas that may have gone unnoticed in a national news cycle, which may now extend for 24 hours but remains driven by ideological and market agendas that continue to infringe on providing nuance and complexity (Hemmer, 2016; Jamieson & Waldman, 2003; Ponce de Leon, 2015).

These first three chapters on political debates, political gaslighting, and African American Trump supporters demonstrate a variety of ways in which scholars can use the C-SPAN Video Library to better understand the nuances behind the 24/7 news narrative and even pierce holes into the accepted political logic it frequently advances. Stephen Llano's chapter, "Congressional Election Debates: Between the National and the Local," offers an antidote to the problematic coverage of political debates while Farah Latif breaks down the misleading media narratives some Republicans have created on climate change. Ray Block Jr. and Christina S. Haynes use content from political rallies and oral histories to explain how and why a variety of prominent African American supporters stumped for Donald Trump in 2016. These essays demonstrate how scholars can use the C-SPAN Video Library to advance research in political science and communication that has tremendous potential to continue the project of transparency and diversity of perspective that C-SPAN itself elevated in politics over 40 years ago.

Do we still need political debates when they fail to inform voters on specific issues and simply have become staged press conferences? This is a question that Stephen Llano poses before he examines the valuable role that debates play in the democratic process. The challenge, he contends,

hinges on a better understanding of what exactly debates reveal, and this demands an overhauling of the dominant ways in which we currently analyze these events. Rather than viewing debates as time during which candidates dispute “superior facts or truths” and battle one another to present a more powerful image of a leader, Llano presents an alternative rubric for watching and judging debate performance. “The way forward,” he argues, is to see them less as “contests of facts, policy, and formal reason” and more as “contests of advocacy: Can they prove they are the best advocate for the values of the constituents while at the same time proving they can act on those beliefs in Washington?”

By analyzing a range of congressional debates that took shape during the 2016 election, Llano provides an effective model for how scholars can use the C-SPAN Video Library to study the intersection of local and national politics. From the beginning, C-SPAN programming provided a more comprehensive look at national political events—legislative procedures, presidential addresses, and party conventions starting in 1980. But programs also valued local politics, like its *Grassroots* ’84 coverage of state political races and issues (Brownell, 2014). Moreover, media-savvy politicians—from Al Gore to Newt Gingrich—have long recognized the ways in which C-SPAN has connected local and national issues, and they have used coverage of the legislative process to elevate their national reputation and transform debate in the House of Representatives into national discussions of issues that have ranged from tax policy to regulation to foreign policy (Smith, 2012). C-SPAN became a tool to advance a modern local-national legislative strategy; thus its archives are essential for scholars seeking to understand this process. As Farah Latif argues, this legislative strategy has, at times, invoked “political gaslighting.” Her examination of Republican conversations about climate change issues reveals a recent effort “to construct populist narratives and stringent attitudes toward climate issues” that advance partisan principles rather than scientific facts. By deconstructing political communication on the cable dial, scholars like Llano and Latif are advancing a new way of understanding and evaluating the changes embedded in political communication in the age of 24/7 news.

The C-SPAN Video Library also provides material for scholars to explore questions that have simply befuddled contemporary pundits, notably,

why would a variety of African Americans mobilize for Donald Trump, a candidate known for cultivating support among White nationalists in a party that has long valued White supporters over Black constituents with its policies and rhetoric? By analyzing a “small but outspoken group of African Americans who once backed, or currently endorse the president and his policies,” Ray Block Jr. and Christina S. Haynes have excavated speeches, interviews, and oral histories of individuals who identified as part of #Blacks4Trump. A range of scholarship has shown that for White voters, race was a motivating factor in their decision to vote for Donald Trump. This builds on a strategy that the Republican Party has cultivated since the 1960s as it turned to the South and to the suburbs in an appeal to traditional Democratic voters who had become disgruntled that the party had endorsed and fought for the civil rights agenda (Crespino, 2012; Kruse, 2005; Lassiter, 2006). Racial concerns have made African Americans, notably women, very loyal to the Democratic Party for the same reasons. And yet, a small, but consistent, demographic of Black voters have cast ballots for the GOP, professing a belief in conservative ideology or support for the GOP economic platform (Wright Rigueur, 2015). Block and Haynes examine C-SPAN footage to explore these voting decisions and how they played out in the contentious 2016 election. With their research, they outline how Black Trump supporters fall into four different categories: “entrepreneurial, doctrinaire, iconoclastic, and complicated.”

This research pierces a variety of holes into dominant assumptions about partisanship and identity politics. As Block and Haynes argue, the political orientation and racial motivators of their subjects “show the fragility of the presumably strong bond between Black Americans and the Democratic Party.” Party operatives on both sides should take note, recognizing that voter loyalty can change and outreach strategies do make a difference. By making sense of seemingly unexplainable moments, like Kayne West’s 2018 controversial visit to the Oval Office, this research advances a better understanding of the connections between race and party politics that forces a more complicated understanding of voting behavior today.

Nuance is overwhelmingly missing from political narratives today, and this has contributed to a more polarizing discussion of current affairs as simply a liberal versus conservative debate (Hemmer, 2016; Kruse &



Zelizer, 2019.) But while this makes for accessible and highly rated television, it obscures other political realities (Cebul, Geismer, & Williams, 2019). To truly combat political polarization, a deeper understanding of the complexity and even the overlooked consensus behind divisive issues is needed, and the C-SPAN Video Library is a useful place for scholars to begin. Over 40 years ago, Al Gore saw C-SPAN as a solution to public cynicism and distrust in government. Television itself did not solve the grave problems facing society then, and in fact, the reliance on television shifted attention toward performance and away from actual governance. But C-SPAN captured the process by which this happened, and its archives might just be the solution for understanding and then advancing new solutions, to solve the pressing political challenges of today.

## NOTE

1. Rep. Al Gore (D-TN) gives first House televised floor speech televised on C-SPAN. March 19, 1979. <https://www.c-span.org/video/?c4600904/rep-al-gore-house-floor-speech-televised-span>.

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# CHAPTER 1

## CONGRESSIONAL ELECTION DEBATES: BETWEEN THE NATIONAL AND THE LOCAL

*Stephen M. Llano*

### DEBATE: THE SUSPECT PRACTICE

Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (Figure 1.1) surprised everyone with her victory in the New York District 14 Democratic primary over incumbent Joe Crowley. Her socialist platform gained a lot of national media attention, with some favorably calling her the future of the Democratic Party. In early August conservative commentator and Internet personality Ben Shapiro asked Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez if she would “have a real conversation . . . about the issues” (Barrett, 2018). Shapiro offered to donate \$10,000 to Ocasio-Cortez’s congressional campaign if she would agree, suggesting that “if you want to raise charity and we can do it as a debate, we can do that too” (Barrett, 2018). Ocasio-Cortez’s campaign responded on Twitter: “I don’t owe a response to unsolicited requests from men with bad intentions,” the Tweet read. “And also like catcalling, for some reason they feel entitled to one” (Relman, 2018). Shapiro responded by calling the tweet “slander,” and since hasn’t said much about it. OpenSecrets, the nonpartisan center for Responsive Politics, pointed out that a \$10,000



FIGURE 1.1 Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez at a congressional hearing.

campaign contribution would violate campaign finance laws. So much for the American tradition of free and open debate.

Small disputes over definition are often shadowboxes for ideology. What understanding of debate is being shopped here? Ocasio-Cortez seems to view debate as a Trojan horse—a gift from an enemy that decorum mandates you accept but could be filled with enemies ready to catch you sleeping. Ocasio-Cortez did not accept it; she is indecorous. Shapiro wasn't offering a clean gift; he was sinister. As he said about the debate, "I would love to debate her because I have one question for her: Name an industry you would not nationalize; which ones should the government not run and why? Alright, can she name any of them?" (Concha, 2018). Such distrust of debate is well warranted in an environment where it is little more than a thinly veiled attempt to expose someone as a phony or fraud. For Shapiro, debate is an exposé of the poseur, not a deep investigation of ideas.

Ocasio-Cortez had no obligation, political or otherwise, to debate a media figure like Shapiro. But if this were her opponent, would the situation change? Congressional candidates don't have to debate with any regularity, like the expectations for U.S. presidential debates. Crowley and Ocasio-Cortez suggested they might have debates in their contested primary, but debates never happened. Clearly, debate was not essential in

determining who should represent the 14th district—the voters did just fine without it. But the obligation to debate haunts all politicians. The ghost usually appears in the dramatic moment of the “empty chair” debate where Jimmy Carter declined the invitation to jointly debate John Anderson and Ronald Reagan in 1980. This event eventually led to the presidential debates being removed from the League of Women Voters and turned over to the newly formed Commission on Presidential Debates, a bipartisan commission composed of former elected representatives and elites from both parties (Kraus, 2000). If debates are obligated, those who have the most to lose should control them.

The result has been events that we feel obligated to have but don’t fully understand how to evaluate. We see debate in a chaotic swirl of potential meanings, most of which are incommensurable. In this chapter I try to establish a new understanding of how election debates might be able to function productively within elections. I rely heavily on the understanding of argumentation presented by Chaïm Perelman and Lucie Olbrechts-Tyteca who in their vastly underrated masterpiece *The New Rhetoric* (1969) outline an inductive theory and understanding of how argument in context functions. I propose a new critical approach for election debates to reveal them as contests, but not contests of argumentative correctness. I believe election debates are best seen as contests of who should be the voice of the values of the community on the national stage. Election debates at the congressional level pit candidates in a contest where voters can see if the candidates can represent their values alongside national values within the particularities of the contexts and situations given to them by journalist and moderators. These debates are not about accuracy or truth but about who can best articulate national or local values in the grammar of the other. Candidates who can articulate national values in terms of the local, or vice versa, are those whose performances we could call successful in the terms of election debating.

Popular conceptions of debate are fraught because of irreconcilable tension between the two narratives of election persuasion and where debate is a tool for the discovery of superior facts or truths. This tension discourages serious consideration of election debates as places where candidates and audiences can explore political identity, community values, and the importance they have in national and local identities. As each

election approaches, we are haunted by this tension. By centering election debates in a context different from ideological demand, we locate election debates in their own appropriate context.

## WHAT'S WRONG WITH ELECTION DEBATES?

There's no shortage of criticism of election debates at the presidential level. Most famously, Sydney Kraus called them "joint press conferences," a not-so-subtle indication that presidential debates are not "really" debates (Kraus, 2000). This criticism appears in all treatments of presidential election debates as a sort of "structural" criticism of these events.

Most scholars cast serious doubt that election debates are debates in the traditional sense. As Jamieson and Birdsell (1990) write, these are

not really debates at all. Much can be said from this point of view. In the most common of the current formats, moderators and/or press panelists come between those who might otherwise argue directly among themselves. Sustained consideration of important issues is at best difficult when the topics shift rapidly, the emphases are determined by non-contestants, and the time is short. (p. 6)

Indeed, these elements are copied seamlessly into congressional election debates as well. The fallout from such a structure is that election debates are hard to evaluate. Jamieson and Birdsell continue: "Candidate debates do provide politicians with a national forum in which to take their cases to the people. . . . Debates in some senses and individual performances in others, these moderated confrontations defy simple classification" (1990, pp. 6–7). Neither candidates nor viewers are certain how to evaluate the discourse they hear during these debates. Jamieson and Birdsell conclude that debates "remain powerful vehicles both for informing and for exposing an often-maligned but nonetheless important characteristic of candidates disparaged as image" (p. 15). Often candidates have 90 seconds or 60 seconds to make an argument, or 20 seconds for rebuttal. These short time restrictions are put in place to allow moderators and journalist panels to explore a very wide range of issues. But there is no space or time

to allow candidates to create necessary depth and articulate supporting evidence for their points.

George Farah (2004) goes the farthest of structural critics and argues that election debates keep particular kinds of arguments in play at the expense of others by design: “With the exception of the 1992 debates, which included Perot, presidential debate content has increasingly consisted of *fundamental issues* and *narrow issues*, at the expense of *systemic issues* focused on the democratic process” (p. 126). Candidates are forced to split their arguments in their limited time, unable to make more helpful, sustained arguments to the audience. This is not accidental; on the contrary, Farah tells us that “rigid format requirements implemented by the Commission on Presidential Debates (CPD) seem designed to stifle, rather than inspire, actual debate between the candidates” (p. 90). Farrah concludes that the debates should be hosted by citizens and not political organizations. Sydney Kraus furthers this claim by pointing out that in 1988, the Markle Commission recommended that federal funding for campaigns be tied to debate participation (2000, p. 249). Debates, despite all of their restrictions, are considered to somehow still be valuable. Most debates are composed of very short speeches and rebuttals, often a minute or less, controlled ruthlessly by journalists who spend time quieting the crowd and cutting off candidate speeches. Within this environment, candidates are forced to be isolated, quick, and direct on the question at hand. The events are chaotic, designed around bizarre expectations that seem opposed to our normal assumptions of good debate.

Yet scholars are unwilling to give up the idea that these events are valuable. Preston (2005) examines the Clinton and Lazio debate in New York using a rubric derived from Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca’s concept of dissociation, but does not analyze the debate directly, discussing what would appeal to voters. Other studies are more on the right track, such as Robert Rowland (2018) who suggests that presidential debates can be valued by looking away from who made the better argument to the norms of public deliberation. Majdik, Kephart, and Goodnight (2008) make a similar claim, speaking of the debates as a place where political leadership is performed that shores up the limits of the democratic public sphere. There appears to be great variety in defending the presidential debates, even if Farah and the structural critics are right that they are not “actual” debates.

After examining all of this research, we are left with events that do not engage in what they aspire to, that are controlled and filtered by organizations not interested in open debate, that are constrained by the technical and optic limits of what television will tolerate—and yet they are thought of as so essential that missing one would be disastrous, or perhaps lose a candidate access to federal funding. How are we to make any sense of them? The way forward in redeeming election debates is to see them less as contests of facts, policy, and formal reason and more in the frame of the epideictic, the modality of ancient rhetoric responsible for praise, blame, celebration, and value. Candidates are engaged in contests of advocacy: Can they prove they are the best advocate for the values of the constituents while at the same time proving they can act on those beliefs in Washington?

Sadly there doesn't seem to be much hope in altering what we get from the media in terms of debates; as Kraus (2000) observes correctly, "power over format ultimately resides in the candidates' camps" (p. 44). It's simply true that a debate cannot happen if the candidates refuse to turn up. I suggest we should examine election debates as a different kind of argument-performance, one that relies very little on the assumed presence of the features of "normal" argument. From these contests, we get a sense of who we would like to identify with, who is our rhetorical co-author of the story of this election. Rowland (2013) notices this when he laments the lack of argumentative reason in the Romney-Obama debates. Such a decline may be less novel than it is noticeable. The goal of election debates is not to be right, but to be convincing. Election debates are not about facts and truth, but about representation, and how well candidates do that for audiences.

## ALTERNATIVES TO REASONED ARGUMENTATION

Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca's *New Rhetoric* (1969) can speak to this question through the modality of the epideictic speech, something not traditionally considered a part of argumentation. Speeches of commemoration, commiseration, celebration, and dedication seem like frivolous traditional exercises that would have little to do with moving audiences toward argumentative conclusions, yet "epideictic oratory has significance



and importance for argumentation because it strengthens the disposition toward action by increasing adherence to the values it lauds" (p. 50). Audiences who hear such discourse are primed based on shared values, often conveyed in a narrative. Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca write:

Unlike the demonstration of a geometrical theorem, which establishes once and for all a logical connection between speculative truths, the argumentation in epideictic discourse sets out to increase the intensity of adherence to certain values, which might not be contested when considered on their own but may nevertheless not prevail against other values that might come into conflict with them. The speaker tries to establish a sense of communion centered around particular values recognized by the audience, and to this end he uses the whole range of means available to the rhetorician for purposes of amplification and enhancement. (p. 51)

This seems to fit the typical election debate speech: relating the self to the community, demonstrating adherence to recognized audience values, and attempting to establish some communion around those values. This is very similar to Kenneth Burke's (1969) suggestion that rhetoric is centrally about identification and division—the quest of people to appear to be consubstantial with the places, ideas, and things they find most valuable. As Burke writes,

A is not identical with his colleague, B. But insofar as their interests are joined, A is identified with B. Or he may identify himself with B even when their interests are not joined, if he assumes that they are, or is persuaded to believe so. (p. 20)

Rhetoric's function is to create moments of identification through language, symbol use, and persuasion. Once identification is made, Burke says that consubstantiality may occur. Rhetorically, it's what the persuader wants to have happen:

You persuade a man only insofar as you can talk his language by speech, gesture, tonality, order, image, attitude, idea, identifying your way with his. Persuasion by flattery is but a special case of

persuasion in general. But flattery can safely serve as our paradigm if we systematically widen its meaning, to see behind it in the conditions of identification or consubstantiality in general. And you give the “signs” of such consubstantiality by deference to an audience’s “opinions.” (p. 55)

Burke suggests here the speaker is positing those “opinions”—in our case, the terms of value, while deferring to them via signs of agreement. Election debaters must choose and refine relevant values and suggest them not as a change of mind, but as present and established already. Candidates use these values to then connect their own actions and beliefs to prove they will be a good advocate.

Epidictic arguments are made in a quasi-logical form. Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca (1969) write, “Only an effort of reduction or specification of a nonformal character makes it possible for these arguments to appear demonstrative” (p. 193). For quasi-logical argumentation to work, one must move discourse away from the formal to the informal. The speaker “is justified in visualizing each one of his listeners as simultaneously belonging to a number of disparate groups. . . . In such a case, he will, by a kind of fiction, insert his audience into a series of different audiences” (p. 22). By doing so, the speaker then creates arguments based on the conception of unity injected rhetorically into the audience’s conception of who they are and why they are listening. The speaker in an election debate seeks consubstantiality with the audience by positing both the importance of the identity and values of the audience and how they represent that combination. We expect to see powerful amplifications of value that are peppered with rich descriptions of various positions one could hold within the community, while still connecting them into a whole the candidate can articulate, advocate, and defend.

The audience, as a site of judgment and consideration of the value and importance of the arguments made by the rhetor, necessarily becomes a source for the creation of argumentation by the speaker. With a conception of who the audience is, and the insertion of that identity into the audience by a call for unity around values or beliefs that define the group, the speaker has a much better chance of persuasion:

The great orator, the one with a hold on his listeners, seems animated by the very mind of his audience. This is not the case for the ardent enthusiast whose sole concern is with what he himself considers important. A speaker of this kind may have some effect on suggestible persons, but generally speaking his speech will strike his audience as unreasonable. (Perelman & Olbrechts-Tyteca, 1969, p. 24)

Here we find the central danger to candidates around this formulation. Speaking about what one thinks is important without enough varied contextualization is worse than being boring. Candidates who fail to connect are wrong, unreasonable, unpersuasive. Once the audience's values are evoked and amplified, the speaker must connect everything they say to that whole. Charland (1987) calls this "constitutive rhetoric," where the audience is theorized as a construction of the speaker rather than addressed as something external to the speech.

When speaking in an election debate, one speaks for and about the audience in terms of values: "In the epideictic, more than in any other kind of oratory, the speaker must have qualifications for speaking on his subject and must also be skillful in its presentation, if he is not to appear ridiculous. For it is not his own cause or viewpoint that he is defending, but that of his entire audience" (Perelman & Olbrechts-Tyteca, 1969, p. 52). Failing to do well is seen as a poor parody of the audience, or worse—someone who is pandering, who isn't really interested in the shared values of the community at all, using the values to get a position they don't deserve.

We should see election debates as referenda on our celebrated virtues and values. In doing so, a potential rubric for evaluating candidates begins to take shape. We expect candidates to perform commitment to them in order to pass judgment. If we don't like what we see, we no longer believe in that candidate as a representative of our values. Candidates lose debates when they fail to properly connect themselves, the audience, and their ideas to the national order. Election debates become referenda on whether candidates can be elastic, powerful speakers able to articulate and defend both our local and national values in the face of varied and changing situations that demand response.

## DEVELOPING A USEFUL HEURISTIC

Recently the rise of political fact check sites and truth meters on cable news networks indicates a desire among debate viewers for objective rubrics for the evaluation of election debates. However, the function of campaign debates remains a function of what candidates want them to be—safe and secure. The joint press conference criticism assumes that there is no other way to examine election debates other than as full-on debates using objective standards for argument evaluation.

I suggest a shift away from fact checking and toward the epideictic. Election debates can be understood as complex rhetorical events meant to establish a convincing story of shared value, and then candidates use that story to prove their superiority. Through the debate, they attempt to hold on to a consistent story about themselves in this world as their opponent tries to prove inconsistency. This is a battle of narratives and consistency more than accuracy and good research. Candidates would be better positioned to treat debates as chances to celebrate themselves and their audience as lauders of a set of unquestionably good values and practices.

To this end, I have developed a four-part model for election debates based on the ancient rhetorical tool of the *stasis*—a set of questions that ancient rhetoricians would use to develop discourse on a question in order to find the most important disagreement. This model differs from other debate analyses as it is designed to seek out the portions of discourse that are most likely to engender audience identification with the speaker and the speaker's narrative of identity. The elements are:

Framework  
Principle  
Vision  
Action

*Framework* refers to any descriptors of what's "out there," what exists, and what things require our attention. These can be descriptions of either material or conceptual things that are known by the audience to be present in the world. Framework is essential because within candidate descriptions of reality, they indicate their consubstantiality with the values of the audience. The framework could spark a candidate to develop a

vision or be the site of action they took that communicates their identification with the values of the community.

*Principle* refers to any statements the candidate makes about what they stand for. Principles are commonly statements that are ideological or philosophical commitments—“I believe in an America where all have opportunity” would be considered principle. Often, candidates will express principles before they discuss a very specific past achievement or a future law or policy they would pursue.

*Vision* is any statement by a candidate about what he or she will do if elected. Any perspective about an action or a commitment they will make when elected, or anything they might plan for when going to Washington counts. Vision is important because it shows audiences that the candidate is an advocate for the beliefs and values of the community. They don’t just believe—they have a plan to defend and promote the good values of the people who put them in office.

*Action* statements are perhaps the most concrete of any in the debates. This is where candidates discuss things they have done that prove their commitment to values. Something as general as serving in the military, volunteering locally, or another action they did in their life or job can count. Most of the time candidates do not have a major successful piece of legislation to stand on to make their point—they are new to the job. They must rely on comparison to their past activities or metaphors as to put voters’ minds at ease and assure the audience that their work in Congress is going to make a difference.

These four elements are usually in concert, but often election debaters will combine them to generate more leverage on an issue. The better a candidate can speak to all four in a response, the better they are performing on that question and possibly in the entire debate. The presence of one or more of the elements in multiple iterations in a candidate speech might be an indicator that a very particular test of values is underway in that question, and the candidate is responding by shoring up what they perceive is a weakness in their performance. Full presentation of all four elements would be necessary to clearly establish the local through the national, or vice versa, in the epideictic contest of election debating.

When candidates interact in election debates, they can be understood through two conceptions offered by Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca. The first is *argument by dissociation*, which “assumes the original unity of

elements comprised within a single conception and designated by a single notion” (1969, p. 416). Dissociation is the rearticulating of a viewpoint to prevent perceived incompatibilities. The authors realize this theory in the idea of the *argument pair*, where a distinction between two different terms explains an incompatibility, as opposed to simply arguing that not enough evidence is apparent. Responses can reframe incompatible aspects of a position by renaming that position in a way that provides consistency and cogency. So a candidate might relabel the term of their opponent to situate them outside of the community of shared values: “He calls it leadership, but it’s simply selfish party politics” would be an example of a dissociative attack on a point of action or vision. Any statement under any of the four elements can be used to attempt to dissociate a candidate from the values in question during a debate. Dissociation is present when a candidate tries to indicate their opponent’s statements are out of line with audience belief or with the meaning of other statements made by the opponent during the debate.

## ANALYSIS: NATIONAL REVELATIONS IN LOCAL DEBATING

It is a given that congressional district debating would only hold interest for those who live and work in the district in question. But contrast that very reasonable assumption with the national attention that the 2018 special elections in Georgia and Pennsylvania garnered. The Pennsylvania special election has over 2,200 views in the C-SPAN Video Library, dwarfing all other congressional election debates for that year by at least a factor of 10. That debate in particular can be seen as a referendum on national values.

In each exchange, the candidates attempt to prove that they are the best representative of both local and national values and deserve the seat. Speakers who use carefully balanced ratios of the four elements are able to address this question most directly in a way that pushes the idea of choice to the side and foregrounds the idea of appropriateness. Since they already stand for those values, no choice needs to be made. Candidates then work toward making themselves consubstantial with both the local values and the national issues.

### Minnesota's 3rd Congressional District Debate of 2016

The first debate between incumbent Erik Paulsen (R-MN) and candidate Terri Bonoff (D) is a good example of how election debates fuse the national and local together under an epistemic term or terms. Both candidates offered opening statements that are instructive for how election debates can be seen as epideictic contests.

The journalist-moderator called the debate “more of a conversation,” placing the candidates in very comfortable chairs sitting around a coffee table. These attempts to purge debate of its negative associations—partisan cheering, talking over one another, and forceful arguing—actually might assist audience members in framing the debate as a contest of perspectives on values rather than a quest for factual accuracy.

Here is Terri Bonoff giving her opening statement in the first debate:

**Bonoff:** I am running for Congress because I believe in the promise of this country and its people [Principle]. It is more important now than ever before that we elect courageous leaders who can bring people together on both sides of the aisle to tackle our real tough challenges [Principle/Framework]. In the Minnesota Senate I have earned a reputation for doing just that. As a pro-business Democrat, I work with the Minnesota Chamber to create the Minnesota Pipeline project [Action]. That program was really about getting rid of student debt and addressing the skills gap. It connected students with employers. They got on-the-job training, got paid wages while getting the degree. When they are done they actually have a job. That work has been written about twice in the last year by *Forbes* magazine [Action]. It is that kind of bold leadership that I will bring to Congress where it is sorely lacking [Vision]. Congressman Paulsen, you have been there—you have been there eight years and I think you have contributed to that gridlock, to that obstructionist congress [Action dissociation]. And I also believe you have voted too often on the wrong side of history, with the extreme part of the right-wing part of your party [Action dissociation]. So I believe I have

the values and the vision to represent this district [Principle].  
(Minnesota House 3rd District Debate, 2016).

Bonoff's use of dissociative argument attempts to place Paulsen outside the realm of appropriate principle (bipartisanship) and action (working across institutions) by indicating obstructionist behavior in party votes. She communicates her actions as consubstantial with Minnesotan's values of hard work and the desire for good jobs, but never really connects these actions to a clear vision or to the principle of representation. To make it stronger, a step-by-step connection should be pursued: I am running for Congress because I see [Framework] and it's similar to the time I [Action] because I believe in [Principle] and I can take that experience to Washington and fix things [Vision].

Looking to Paulsen's opening statement, we see a bit of a different approach:

**Paulsen:** I am running for Congress once again. Now is a time when Minnesota expects its elected leaders, now more than any other time, to work across the aisle bipartisanship [Framework]. Transcend partisan politics. And I've got a great track record of doing that, I'm gonna continue to do that [Vision], whether it's repealing the medical device tax, which focuses on keeping high-paying jobs in the state, high-paying jobs that are so critical in all of Minnesota [Action]. I worked on that with Senator Klobuchar and I was persistent [Action]. It took five years to get that across the finish line, to suspend that tax, so sometimes it can take a while, or sometimes there may be an issue that moves quicker, such as stopping human trafficking or sex trafficking, also a very bipartisan issue [Action]. We were able to do that in less than a year and it's literally saving lives. Recently I passed a missing children bill which will help find missing children and put sex offenders behind bars [Action]. And so we are in a time now with partisan gridlock, with partisan politics, and I want to continue to be a part of a constructive solution to move the ball forward [Vision]. (Minnesota House 3rd District Debate, 2016).



Paulsen doesn't discuss Principle, primarily because he is the incumbent. What is interesting here is how Paulsen makes the national issue, brought up by Bonoff, of the lack of leadership precisely the heart of a local issue as well. By blending those two issues into one response that can be addressed by drawing on Action, Paulsen can discuss Principle and Vision much less, since he's convincingly indicating that he stands for the value of bipartisan leadership both nationally and in ways that Minnesotans can appreciate. Paulsen makes the connection that Bonhoff should have made—that of Washington Vision with local Action. Paulsen does it in reverse since he's the incumbent: Washington Action supported local Principles, which is his Vision of representation.

Both opening speeches share the Framework of bipartisanship and are very strong on accomplishments. The candidates' lack of development on Vision and Principle don't take enough advantage of their accomplishments, placing them in better relations with other elements so that audiences can see the potential each candidate could offer. By contrast, an election under different circumstances, without an incumbent, accesses a different metric for evaluation. Candidates express themselves quite a bit differently.

### **Pennsylvania's 18th District Special Election Congressional Debate**

Congressman Tim Murphy (R-PA), accused of ethics violations, resigned his seat in Pennsylvania's 18th District, opening up a special election contest between Democrat Conor Lamb and Republican Rick Saccone. The difference in this debate is fascinating, as it simultaneously seems to be a contest between who best represents the district's values and the values expressed by the presidency of Donald Trump. Both candidates must figure out a way to situate the values of the people in the district with their support of Trump or rejection of his policies.

The question of integrity—based on Tim Murphy's resignation—starts the debate, and Conor Lamb is first to answer:

**Moderator:** If you win, what specific steps will you take to be a man of your word?

**Lamb:** I learned to be a man of my word from my father and my grandfather [Action]. I had the privilege of growing up in

a great family that has a lot of fun but is also very demanding [Action]. And when I became a little older I also had the honor of a lifetime of becoming an officer in the United States Marine Corps [Action]. I didn't become an officer in the Marines to change for anybody [Principle]. When I took the oath for the first time I thought about the phrase *semper fidelis*. It means always. Some things are nonnegotiable [Principle]. Telling the truth, having integrity, and treating your people right are just basic things that we live by [Principle]. There is one thing we say in the Marines: Officers eat last. We take it literally. When the whole group gets together for Thanksgiving dinner or dinner out in the field, the highest ranking officer goes to the end of the line and the junior ranking Marine eats first [Principle]. And that's how we treat each other—you always put your people first, and that's what I'll do [Vision]. (Pennsylvania 18th Congressional District Debate, 2018)

Through a series of listed Actions, Lamb encounters and embraces Principles that he clearly understands are important. He doesn't posit them, but indicates how he came to understand and accept them. He then takes these Principles and uses them to support a Vision of his work in Washington. Lamb allows the audience to journey with him through these experiences. Lamb is able to take the values of the Marines and translate them as very clear, very common values of service and respect, claiming these are his daily practices and he will employ them in his congressional service.

Let's examine Saccone's response to the same question:

**Saccone:** I've always lived by my word [Principle]. I spent 18 years in the United States Air Force. I've been a military commander—I commanded troops, they depended on me to be a man of my word. [Action] I've worked in the state legislature where every word you say is picked apart and put on camera every day. All my speeches and all my appearances are put up on my website and so forth [Action], and so I'm always—I'm

always very much aware that your word matters and people will look at that [Principle], and I think that the people in the 18th district know that I've kept my word from the various campaign promises I made 8 years ago. I followed all of those campaign promises and I believe I kept them all [Action]. So I think I'm known as a man of integrity and a man of my word, and I will continue that in the U.S. Congress [Vision]. (Pennsylvania 18th Congressional District Debate, 2018)

Saccone falls victim to Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca's warning that discussing what matters to the speaker might be perceived as unreasonable. Lamb's speech addressed the audience in a way that Saccone's could not: Lamb offered the audience experiences that they might have shared—growing up, getting a job, and determining one's values. Saccone looked at his own life and found examples of action that remain disconnected to audience life experience. Lamb develops his identity within a community context of honesty, while Saccone treats it as an object. The difference is very stark. Saccone makes little attempt to connect to the national or local values, believing his record as a state representative can stand on its own. He reaches for a position of expertise, when the best way to indicate expertise in values might be lived experiences.

Later in the debate, a journalist asks—in one of the potentially strangest debate questions of all time—how the candidates would rank a list of random priorities for government involvement:

**Journalist:** Rank them in order of your spending priority: infrastructure, opioid epidemic, education, border wall.

**Saccone:** It's not an either-or in government [Principle]. Budgets are large and there are many, many priorities in there [Framework]. Yes, walls are important, walls work [Principle]. I've been to Israel; I've seen the wall that they built and the results of what they've done there [Action]. Walls in other countries have worked [Framework]. We need to secure our border; we need to do that for national security reasons [Vision]. The opioid crisis—I want to spend a lot more time on that because it's something I've spent a lot of time on and

it's very important, and we need to work on that too [Action/Vision]. It's a different answer to a different question. So I would say we need to do both of those things [Vision].

**Moderator:** So it's infrastructure, education, opioids, and the border wall—can you rank those please?

**Saccone:** Again, I say they are all important [Principle]. And we are going to get them all done [Vision]. (Pennsylvania 18th Congressional District Debate, 2018)

Saccone attempts a dissociative argument here using Framework. Governments can do several priorities at once—this is how they work. The dissociation of resource and priority isn't accurate. The incompatibility of a list with his own priorities is answered by movement to the second term of "government." Without a priority list, Saccone feels safe to discuss his expertise via personal experience. Ultimately, the actions feel disconnected and don't allow him space or time to communicate his beliefs. Saccone tries for the best of both worlds, but ends up speaking only about his experiences mostly, not connecting them to the values of the district, or even the values that might be shared nationally with the district.

Lamb's response accepts the list and uses it to craft a thread of value positions:

**Lamb:** To answer your question, I would vote for infrastructure first [Vision]. People in both parties are tellin' us right now that we have three trillion dollars' worth of infrastructure programs that we are behind on [Framework]. That's our roads, that's our bridges. Here in Pittsburgh that's our locks and dams [Framework]. Unfortunately, my opponent is someone who has voted time and again against those very programs at the state level, even when they are backed by Republicans [Action dissociation]. So, highways and bridges—everybody gets to ride on them, no matter what party they are [Principle]. I think they're important [Vision]. Next for me would be the heroin epidemic. It's life or death. In the next 5 years we could lose 300,000 people to the heroin epidemic [Framework]. If we were losing that many in a war, we would

stop at nothing to stop it [Principle]. I think that's the most important. Education to me would probably be next. We can't continue cutting our public schools because class sizes go up, we lose programs [Vision]. The border wall is 25 billion, it's expensive. I've seen that it's our ports of entry that need the most investment [Vision]. The number one entry point for fentanyl in the United States is JFK airport—we need security there [Framework].

**Moderator:** That's it for that question. (Pennsylvania 18th Congressional District Debate, 2018)

Lamb provides here a great example of how to accomplish a lot given a very difficult question and limited time. Notice the pairings here—Framework with Vision or Principle—something we don't get from Saccone. This pairing works well to allow the choice to be pushed off onto “reality” rather than Lamb's priority or preference. Lamb moves seamlessly between the local and the national as he discusses deteriorating Pittsburgh bridges and JFK airport as an unsecured drug trafficking site. He also manages to explain the inconsistencies in Saccone's response by dissociating him from America and the 18th District's roads and placing him with the state legislature Republicans, voting against their interests. Lamb's speech immediately connects him to the larger community values, and then creates a springboard for articulating his vision. Most importantly, he gives us grist for the mill—we are able to evaluate his positions and feelings because he articulates them rather than depending on expertise.

Next the journalists turn to the issue of North Korea, and this response indicates the importance of establishing good dissociation in election debates. The first question goes to Saccone, who expresses his position on North Korea, and his own values, quite clearly:

**Moderator:** You're an expert, you've lived in North Korea—what's the one thing you wanna tell President Trump about how to deal with that situation?

**Saccone:** My purpose if I were to get to Washington would be to advise the president on how to resolve this situation with North Korea from wherever we are at that time [Vision]. It

does no good to criticize from where we came or how we got there[Principle]. It would be how do we find our endpoint, resolving the situation from wherever we are at that time [Vision]. I'm the only one who has the skill set to do that [Principle]. My opponent doesn't even know the difference between North and South Korea. I've been there, I've lived a year inside there, I've successfully negotiated with North Koreans, I've actually written two books about it [Action]. So that would be my purpose and that's how I would approach that. There is a path in dealing with North Korea. It's very narrow [Framework]. But I feel like I'm the only one who has the skill set to reach that path [Action].

**Moderator:** Mr. Lamb, you can respond to that—I'm pretty sure you know the difference between North and South Korea, but you can respond.

**Lamb:** You and everyone watching knows that, Shannon, so thank you. It's amazing the lengths that they'll go to on the other side to say things that aren't true [Action dissociation]. But I think we do agree that negotiation is necessary, that we need experienced diplomats over there [Principle]—unfortunately we've seen a lot of people leave the State Department in this administration. which makes it hard to get the basic work done [Framework], but look, we don't need another vote against North Korea in Congress [Principle]. What we need in Congress are people who are willing to stand up to the leadership on both sides, oppose cuts in Medicaid, oppose all the other cuts that the Republican Party is known for right now and pass a budget that's for our people, that gets infrastructure done, that protects Social Security and Medicare—that's what we need in Congress [Principle]. (Pennsylvania 18th Congressional District Debate)

Instead of a direct response—something like proving he's smart enough to address North Korean issues, Lamb dissociates again, explaining this attack by placing Saccone in the camp of “the other side.” He then associates North Korea not as a case of individual expertise, but a sweeping

problem of leadership. He indicates his vision, that of strong, stand-up leadership, is what is needed, not just another vote. Compared to Saccone's answer, we see Lamb is demonstrative not of knowledge of North Korea but of an embodiment of the values of the district and a clear path to how to translate that knowledge on a national stage. If North Korea is just another issue that requires a particular kind of leadership, then Saccone's specific experiences are no longer relevant. Again, Saccone relies on traditional ethos, while Lamb uses every opportunity to express differentiation across terms to indicate his relevance to voters and his stance nationally.

In the Pennsylvania debate we find Conor Lamb is better at connecting the local and the national through careful use of Framework in relation to Principle and Vision. Rick Saccone concentrates on Action without much Framework, and does not develop Vision and Principle. He's left without a place to connect his accomplishments and provide a demonstration that he can embody the values of his district. Even comparing the points of Vision and Action between the speeches, we find that Saccone talks more about his qualifications and Lamb talks more about the state of the country and the people of Pennsylvania's 18th District.

The most contemporary example is from the recent Texas Senate race between Representative Beto O'Rourke (D-TX) and incumbent Senator Ted Cruz (R-TX). These debates serve as a very good example of the evaluative criteria primarily because both candidates are very skilled at deploying both a wide range of examples across the elements and developing dissociative arguments. What's interesting is the contrasting strategies in priority of element deployment.

### **The First Senate Debate in the Texas 2018 Election**

The Texas Senate Debates of 2018 (Figure 1.2) can be considered a master class in dissociation. Both candidates are very good at not getting caught up in the idea that the debate is meant to prove something true or correct. Both candidates understand the debate is meant to be an opportunity to share reasons why they stand for the values that are best for the voters as well as in line with how they feel about national concerns.

Immigration was the first issue in this debate, and O'Rourke started the debate with this speech:

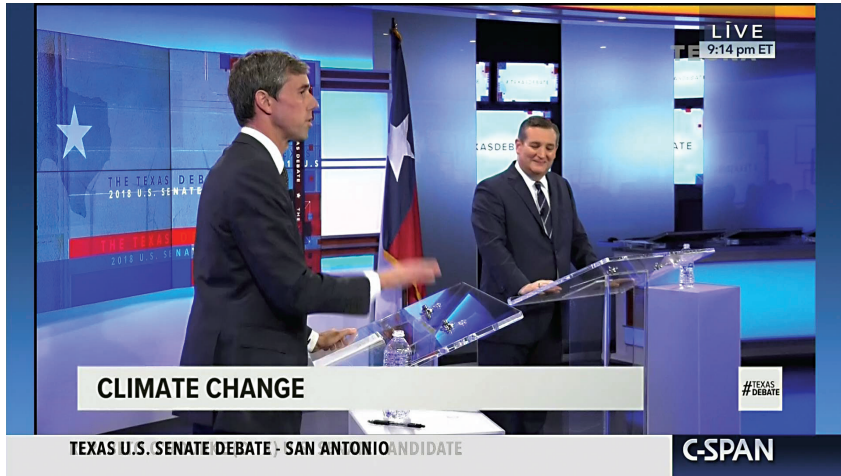


FIGURE 1.2 2018 Texas U.S. Senate debate.

**O'Rourke:** My wife Amy and I were in Booker, Texas. We traveled to every one of the 254 counties, one of the reddest communities in the state [Action], and we were surprised as we were goin' door to door to hear that the number one concern of the people of that community was the fate of Dreamers [Framework]. There are nearly 200,000 in the state of Texas and the salutatorian of Booker High School had just been deported back to his country of origin—and to everyone there was concern about his welfare, but they were also concerned about the fact that he had been just sent back to a country whose language he didn't speak, where he no longer had family connections, where if he was successful against those long odds he'd be successful there, for that place, and not here for Texas [Framework]. There is no better people than those of us here in this state, Republicans and Democrats, independents alike [Principle]. The defining border experience, the defining immigrant experience and state to rewrite our immigration laws in our own image [Vision]. To ensure that we begin by freeing Dreamers from the fear of deportation by making them U.S. citizens so they can contribute to their full potential, to the success not just of themselves and their families



but to this country [Vision]. The economists who've studied it have said that we will lose hundreds of billions of dollars to the negative if we deport them; we will gain hundreds of billions to the positive if we keep them here [Vision]. Senator Cruz has promised to deport each and every single Dreamer. That cannot be the way that Texas leads on this important issue [Action dissociation]. (Texas Senate Debate, 2018)

O'Rourke's point here seems clear. He's in direct contact with everything that's out there in connection to immigration. But the Vision falls a bit short—it is unclear what O'Rourke wishes to do to enact his Principle. It seems to be immigration reform, but a more direct response would be to save Booker from losing valuable community members. Placing Ted Cruz outside of the Principles of Texas is dissociation: Cruz claims to lead Texas and the nation here, but would deport good members of Texas communities. In the end, O'Rourke needs a clearer Vision-Principle connection and a return to Action near the end to make the strongest possible case. O'Rourke appears to be building his arguments in this sequence: Action → Framework → Principle → Vision. Spelled out, it would be that the trip to the 254 Texas counties revealed the Dreamer situation as a bipartisan problem requiring a reconceptualization of national immigration law provided by adherence and articulation of Texas values on a national level. But he is not direct enough in his articulation. Plus, that's a mouthful for less than a minute of provided time.

Let's examine Ted Cruz's response to the same question:

**Cruz:** You know, this issue presents a stark divide between Congressman O'Rourke and me. My views on immigration are simple, and I've summed them up many times in just four words: legal good, illegal bad [Principle]. I think the vast majority of Texans agree with that [Framework]. I think that when it comes to immigration, we need to do everything humanly possible to secure the border [Vision]. That means building a wall [Vision]. That means technology, that means infrastructure, that means boots on the ground [Vision], and we can do all of that at the same time that we are welcoming

and celebrating legal immigrants [Action]. There is a right way to come into this country [Principle]. You wait in line, you follow the rules like my father did in 1957 when he came from Cuba—he fled oppression and he came to Texas, he came seeking freedom [Principle]. We’re a state and we’re a nation built by immigrants [Framework]. But it’s striking that Congressman O’Rourke—over and over and over again his focus seems to be on fighting for illegal immigrants and forgetting the millions and millions of Americans, you know, Americans are dreamers also [Action dissociation]. And granting U.S. citizenship to 12 million people who are here illegally is a serious mistake. I think Congressman O’Rourke is out of step with Texas on that [Framework/Action dissociation]. (Texas Senate Debate, 2018)

Cruz’s dissociation is much clearer and more effective than O’Rourke’s. Cruz emphasizes national values as commensurate with Texas values with zero overlap. This makes Cruz appear to understand Texas values in a way that is actionable—he lists several points of vision based on the idea of legal immigration which he posits as a Texas central value. Cruz’s argument might not be in step or out of step with Texas, but it can be rendered: Principle → Vision → Framework → Action. Texans support a coherent approach to immigration for the United States that is clear and effective. This is a much more basic articulation of values than O’Rourke’s. Cruz’s vision is simplistic, but articulated every effectively. O’Rourke has a much more visionary perspective, which is fine, as long as it can be communicated well through the dissociative challenges. His response shows how he tries to build consensus around Texas values:

**O’Rourke:** I’ll tell ya about being out of step with Texas. Senator Cruz has sponsored legislation that would have this country build a 2,000-mile wall 30 feet high at a cost of 30 billion dollars [Vision dissociation] and that wall will not be built on the international border between the United States and Mexico, which is the center line of the Rio Grande [Framework dissociation]. It will be built on someone’s farm, someone’s ranch,

someone's property, someone's homestead, using the power of imminent domain to take their property at a time of record security and safety on the border [Action/Vision dissociation]. Senator John Cornyn and I introduced legislation that would invest in our ports of entry, where the vast majority of everyone and everything that comes into this country first crosses [Action]. Knowing who or what come in here makes us safer, it allows us to lead on the issues of immigration reform [Principle/Vision]. (Texas Senate Debate, 2018)

O'Rourke has a powerful argument here, that Texas values are so strong they are not only in concert with where the nation is, they also lead national changes in values on major issues such as immigration. This argument is very difficult to construct in the light of Cruz's simple good/bad dichotomy, which resonates with nearly every American listening. O'Rourke attempts to dissociate Cruz from every major term of his argument, indicating that each claim he made is not "in step" with Texas values. O'Rourke believes he's more at the center of Texas values by suggesting leadership on the national immigration discussion. Cruz believes that enforcing extant American law will be enough.

This exchange shows how candidates should be to stay on track with the progression of Framework to Action. As Beto O'Rourke shifts from immigration reform toward border security, his arguments about Action and Principle on security are underdeveloped within his Framework arguments and the dissociative challenge to his position on DACA. Cruz has a more coherent articulation of Vision within the Framework, placing O'Rourke as "out of step"—one of these debate phrases that the media loves to circulate. We move very quickly from the status of Dreamers to the question of border security. O'Rourke has a complex position that requires a bit more careful attention.

As a final example, the issue of police violence on African Americans was introduced this way by the moderator, and posed it to Cruz:

**Moderator:** Senator Cruz, this question is to you. This month in Dallas, Officer Amber Guyger shot Botham Jean, a Black man, in his own apartment. Why did you caution Representative

O'Rourke and others not to jump to conclusions in this case when the Texas Rangers and the Dallas County District Attorney said she committed manslaughter?

**Cruz:** What happened to Mr. Jean was horrific [Principle]. Nobody should be in their own home and be shot and killed in their own home [Principle]. It was tragic [Principle]. Now, the officer as I understand it has contended that it was a tragic mistake [Framework]. It was a case where she thought she was in her own apartment. She thought he was an intruder [Framework]. Right now today, I don't know what happened that evening. Congressman O'Rourke doesn't know what happened that evening [Framework], but he immediately called for firing the officer [Action]. I think that's a mistake [Principle]. We have a criminal justice system, a criminal justice system that will determine what happened that night [Framework]. If she violated the law, if she did that intentionally, she'll face the consequences, but without knowing the fact before a trial, before juries heard the evidence, Congressman O'Rourke is ready to convict her, ready to fire her, and I'll tell you it's a troubling pattern [Principle dissociation]. Over and over again, Congressman O'Rourke when faced with an issue about police and law enforcement, he sides against the police [Principle dissociation]. In the United States Congress, he voted against allowing funds to go to body armor for sheriffs [Action dissociation]. When it comes to Immigration and Customs Enforcement, he has said he's open to abolishing that law enforcement agency [Vision dissociation], and just this week, Congressman O'Rourke described law enforcement, described police officers as modern-day Jim Crow [Action dissociation]. Let me say something, I've gotten enough police officers all across this state that is offensive [Principle]. Just today, Fort Worth is burying Officer Garrett Hull with his wife Sabrina and two kids who was shot in the head risking his life. Here today, Officer Bryan Graham, an Arlington SWAT officer, was shot in the head [Framework].

**Moderator:** Senator, I'm going to have to stop—

**Cruz:** He is here and every day police officers risk their lives for us [Framework]. Officer Graham is standing there, his two kids. He took a bullet in the head protecting us, and let me say right now I think it is offensive to call police officers modern-day Jim Crow [Principle]. That is not Texas.

**Moderator:** That's your time, Senator. Please, please audience. Please, no applause. (Texas Senate Debate, 2018)

Ted Cruz starts with multiple Principles—it's tragic, it's not acceptable to be killed in one's home—and moves into dissociating O'Rourke from law and order. He claims that O'Rourke cannot support law and order by stating that we are in a new "Jim Crow." The Framework of police violence follows to prove that the police are sacrificing themselves for our protection. The vast number of Principle-statements outnumber all other elements, and there's no mention of Vision or articulation of a plan for addressing the issue. Cruz feels comfortable standing in the middle of the value relation he's constructed, that of the police. There's no policy here except to reject the inconsistent and out-of-step O'Rourke.

O'Rourke always attempts to move to Vision in his speeches, and in his response, there's little difference:

**O'Rourke:** What Senator Cruz said is simply untrue. I did not call police officers modern-day Jim Crow, and I as well as Senator Cruz and everyone here mourn the passing of Officer Hull in Fort Worth [Action]. My Uncle Raymond was a sheriff's deputy in El Paso. In fact, he was the captain of the El Paso County Jail [Framework]. He's the one who taught me to shoot and the responsibility and accountability that comes with owning a gun, but he also taught me what it means to serve everyone, to be sworn to protect and serve everyone in a community, not just some people [Principle]. With the tragic shooting death of Botham Jean you have another unarmed Black man killed in this country by law enforcement [Framework]. Now, no member of law enforcement wants that to happen [Principle]. No member of this community

wants that to happen, but we've got to do something better than what we've been doing so far [Vision]. If African Americans represent 13% of the population in this country, and they represent one-third of those who are shot by law enforcement, we have something wrong [Principle/Framework]. If we have the largest prison population on the face of the planet and it is disproportionately comprised of people of color, we have something wrong in this country [Framework/Principle]. Republicans and Democrats should be able to work together with law enforcement and members of the community for real, lasting, meaningful criminal justice reform [Vision]. (Texas Senate Debate, 2018)

O'Rourke establishes bipartisanship as the key part of his Vision. His Framework highlights events and facts that lead us to think that something is very wrong in law enforcement. Violence against the police exists and is not a Texas value; he's against it. O'Rourke suggests that his Principles will lead him to push for criminal justice reform when in Washington, but this remains underdeveloped. Comparing O'Rourke to Cruz, we see a superior development of the move from Principle-Framework-Vision in O'Rourke to Cruz's choice of Principle-Framework. This prompts the follow-up from the moderator, pushing on Cruz's lack of rhetoric we could call Vision:

**Moderator:** Congressman, that's your time. A quick follow-up to you, Senator Cruz, do you agree that police violence against unarmed African Americans is a problem, and if so, how would you fix it?

**Cruz:** I believe everyone's right should be protected regardless of your race, regardless of your ethnicity, but I'll tell you something [Principle]. I've been to too many police funerals. I was here in Dallas when five police officers were gunned down because of irresponsible and hateful rhetoric [Action]. I was at the funeral in Houston at Second Baptist Church where Deputy Goforth had been shot in the back of the head at a service station because of irresponsible and hateful rhetoric [Action]. Just now, Congressman O'Rourke repeated things

he knows aren't true [Framework dissociation]. He stated for example White police officers are shooting unarmed African American children [Framework dissociation]. *The Washington Post* fact checked that claim and concluded Congressman O'Rourke was wrong, but I'll tell you something—that rhetoric does damage [Principle].

**Moderator:** Senator—

**Cruz:** That rhetoric divides us on race [Principle]. It inflames hatred [Principle]. We should be bringing people together instead of suggesting the police are risking their lives to protect all of us, to protect African Americans, to protect Hispanics and turning people against the police people [Vision]. (Texas Senate Debate, 2018)

Candidates often violate time constraints in order to convince the audience that they are overcome with passion about an important issue. Cruz dissociates O'Rourke from reality, or Framework, and tries to connect this to his indictment of irresponsible rhetoric. Cruz needs to establish a competing Vision of the world that he has to be able to match O'Rourke on Vision. Here, Cruz is lacking. But it might not matter due to the double-down on Principle that has governed Cruz's total approach on this question. After Cruz's heated speech, audience applause becomes the focus of the moderators' ire, and the candidates share a moment of "illicit" direct engagement, which is also revealing:

**Moderator:** Senator, please.

**Cruz:** I think it's profoundly—

**O'Rourke:** This is why people don't like Washington, D.C [Framework]. You just said something that I did not say—

**Cruz:** What did you not say?

**O'Rourke:** —and attributed it to me.

**Cruz:** What did you not say?

**O'Rourke:** I'm not going to repeat. I'm not going to repeat the slander [Action].

**Moderator:** Audience, please—

**Cruz:** So what is it then?

**O'Rourke:** I'm not going to repeat the slander [Action].

**Cruz:** You're not going to say what you did say [Action dissociation]?

**O'Rourke:** This is your trick in the trade, to confuse and to incite based on fear and not to speak the truth [Vision dissociation]. This is a very serious issue and it warrants the truth and the facts [Principle]. (Texas Senate Debate, 2018)

Here O'Rourke attempts to use Principle in a meta-move to put Cruz as outside of the ideals of justice in his practices as a Senator as well as in the debate. Cruz misses the moment to construct his own position on Washington and on O'Rourke's statements. He stays relatively quiet, hoping O'Rourke will make a mistake. What's interesting here is that O'Rourke demonstrates that no matter how short the time, establishment of the four elements of the debate can happen, and every little bit seems to assist. At the end of the exchange we have a sense that Cruz, in principle, supports the police while O'Rourke has a vision of criminal justice reform for all. O'Rourke might not be in full support of the police like Cruz, but Cruz is also identified as being consubstantial with Washington, as well as lacking Vision to address the larger Framework of criminal justice reform. Cruz again has the advantage of simplicity, but lacks Vision. O'Rourke lacks grounding for his Vision, which winds up articulated very thinly in the face of Cruz's dissociative argumentation.

## CONCLUSION

Election debate events fail because we use the wrong metric to understand what they are. Seen as cultural, epideictic rhetorical performances, they become rich events worthy of scholarly attention beyond voting results. Instead, we see that congressional election debates can be evaluated as complex rhetorical performances involving four key categories of claims. Seeing election debates not as our antiseptic, Enlightenment conception of debating but as a deep rhetorical ritual of argumentation opens the door to both scholarly commentary and a rich resource of advisory capacity for candidates out there who wonder if they can get out of debating.



Seeing debating as a distraction from the work of politics is not good. Seeing it as counterproductive to politics is worse. Luckily we can take another view, and see election debates as potential sites of subversion of narratives that audiences bring to the table with them, if candidates are savvy enough to use that material to craft new perspectives. Thinking of these events as complex contests about representation of identity might not save them from the critique that they are not actual debates, but recovers distinct and important values for these events in political discourse.

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## CHAPTER 2

# POLITICAL GASLIGHTING IN THE CLIMATE CHANGE DISCOURSE SURROUNDING THE 2016 ELECTION

*Farah Latif*

This chapter introduces the concept of *political gaslighting* in the context of climate change political discourse. Political gaslighting is a form of deception that destabilizes and disorients public opinion on political issues. Thus, political gaslighting is a strategy used to garner support for or against an ideology, viewpoint, or policy. This chapter explores the etymology of the concept of *gaslighting* and its emergence as a political strategy through a content analysis of elected Republican politicians' discourse and behaviors surrounding the 2016 elections. This research suggests that political gaslighting is an observable phenomenon in instances when some Republican politicians join the House Climate Solutions Caucus (CSC) to support pro-climate legislation, yet demonstrate behaviors that are contrary to the obligations of CSC.

Learning more about political gaslighting in the context of climate change may help illustrate the reasons why climate change policy remains a partisan issue (Marquart-Pyatt, McCright, Dietz, & Dunlap, 2014). A representative sample of Americans shows that 71% of Americans believe that changing climate is real, 54% believe in its anthropogenic nature, and 63% are worried about climate and understand that the negative effects of climate change can be reversed (Leiserowitz et al., 2018); whereas, the partisan divide among American voters during elections grew by 23 points from 2001 to 2017 (Newport & Dugan, 2017). Thus, growing concern about climate change and deeply partisan voting behavior indicate dissonance between the beliefs of American voters and their adherence to party-line voting behavior.

The reason climate change is picked to uncover the evidence of political gaslighting in politicians is that science is clear on climate change with a 97% consensus from climate scientists that man-made climate change exists (Cook et al., 2013; Powell, 2016). Further, dramatic weather changes manifested as heat waves and droughts have caused increased water and food insecurity (Woodward et al., 2012); heavy precipitation has caused higher sea levels and ocean acidification that harms marine and human life (Lawrence et al., 2014). Because these are scientists' grave concerns about the overall health and well-being of human life due to declining environmental quality, any help to reduce the cognitive dissonance in the beliefs of the American voters and their voting behavior will be valuable in supporting pro-climate policy efforts.

The purpose of this chapter is to examine whether Republicans engaged in gaslighting the public about their commitment to climate change. To establish a correlation between gaslighting on climate change issues and public perception of climate change is outside the scope of the chapter; however, the research will look at whether there was political gaslighting regarding climate change issues. Thus, the research analyzes the political discourse of nine elected Republican politicians who have joined the Climate Solution Caucus (CSC). In addition, the research elaborates that political gaslighting is harmful. The goal of this chapter is to conceptualize the phenomenon of *political gaslighting* so the public can identify it and perhaps be vigilant against political gaslighting.

## DISCUSSION

The Internet provides a free exchange of information, but unfortunately, there is little that can be done to prevent the exchange of misinformation. Misinformation is easily sharable with others and can become permanent on the Internet; thus, misinformation manifests itself as fake news. In the political vernacular, *fake news* refers to “ideological extremism, misinformation and the intention to persuade readers to respect or hate a candidate or policy based on emotional appeals,” (Howard, Kollyanyi, Bradshaw, & Meudart, 2017, p. 5). In addition, a negative outcome of “the post-truth era” is that the media serve as a playground for political players to advance political agendas in the public sphere with limited scrutiny from the media gatekeepers.

### Confusion About Climate Change Science

Organized climate change opponents’ significant accomplishment has been instilling the notion of *false controversy*, the idea that the scientific community has uncertainty about climate change and that climate science is inconclusive or “messy” (Ding, Maibach, Zhao, Roser-Renouf, & Leiserowitz, 2011; Leiserowitz, Maibach, Roser-Renouf, & Smith, 2011). Van der Linden (2015) noted that casting doubt on the *gateway belief* that there is scientific consensus on human-caused climate change breeds confusion and mistrust in supporting scientific evidence and climate-related policies.

People often follow the beliefs of trusted elites such as politicians (Zaller, 1992), and trust in conspiratorial information significantly increases with each time an individual is exposed to it (Pennycook, Cannon, & Rand, 2018). It is also well documented that organized climate change denial is especially predominant among conservative Republicans (Davenport & Lipton, 2017; van der Linden, 2015). Thus, if Republican politicians trivialize climate change, it is likely that the Republican voters will hold dismissive attitude toward climate change policies despite concern over climate change.

Such a surrender to the will of trusted others can be explained by gaslighting. Before discussing political gaslighting, reviewing the etymology of the term will clarify how gaslighting is different from ordinary deception;

a particularly noteworthy difference is that the emotional and psychological toll of political gaslighting is on civil society.

### **"Gaslighting" Defined**

The *Oxford English Dictionary* has defined gaslighting as an "action or process of manipulating a person by psychological means into questioning his or her own sanity" (2016). The term emerged in the United Kingdom in Hamilton's (1939) play, *Gas Light* (known in the United States as *Angel Street*) in which Hamilton raised concern over a social phenomenon where people purged unwanted family members by claiming that they had gone insane and committing them to the insane asylums (Smith & Sinanan, 1972). A motion picture rendition of the play was later produced in the United States in 1944.

Barton and Whitehead (1969) noted the frequently unrecognized emotional and psychological abuse in their seminal work "The Gas-Light Phenomenon." They recognized that sometimes family members' constant manipulation can literally drive the victims to insanity.

With the etymology of the word in theatre, American cinema, and clinical psychology, gaslighting describes tactics by the gaslighter that cause confusion, indecisiveness, doubts of the gaslightee's own perceptions, and surrender to the manipulations of the gaslighter (Barton & Whitehead, 1969; Gass & Nichols, 1988; Kline, 2006; Smith & Sinanan, 1972).

### **Earlier Use of the Term "Gaslighting"**

In the psychoanalysis of abusive domestic partners, gaslighting is described as "the act of deliberately trying to drive someone [literally] crazy by psychologically manipulating their environment or the facts, and tricking that person into doubting their own reality" (Stern, 2007, para. 14).

Anecdotal observation shows that gaslighting is a masculine behavior that occurs when the male partners label their female partners as jealous or insecure so that they can excuse their philandering ways or blame the women for pushing them into cheating (Gass & Nichols, 1988). "Gaslighting often evokes disturbing emotions, low self-esteem, and cognitive dyscontrol

by causing the individual [i.e., gaslightee] to question his own abilities for thinking, perceiving, and reality testing” (Dorpat, 1996, p. 34), leading a gaslightee to self-doubt, diminished self-esteem, confusion, anxiety, depression, and even psychosis.

### Recent Use of the Term “Gaslighting”

Slavs and Tartars<sup>1</sup> (2018) reviewed the writings of Johann Georg Hamann, the 18th-century philosopher whose philosophical framework later spurred the *Sturm und Drang*<sup>2</sup> movement and who once referred to his work as deliberately “‘cryptic,’ ‘deranged’ and ‘unintelligible’” (Slavs and Tartars, 2018, p. 23). Slavs and Tartars wrote, “Never before in Western literature had an author written with the deliberate aim of not being understood” (p. 23). They further noted that Hamann gaslighted the admirers of the *Enlightenment* through the use of elusive religious logic (he was a staunch Lutheran) and his “highly sexualized, often vulgar language” (p. 23).

Ahern (2018) used the term *gaslighting* to draw a link between the distress experienced by whistleblowers in the medical field and the institutional policies that fail to protect them when they report malfeasance. The whistleblowers received skepticism, harsh criticism, and scrutiny of the allegations, which often led to counteraccusations and personal attacks on them. The institutional red tape make the whistleblowers feel that their “reactions, perceptions, memories, and beliefs [were] not just mistaken but utterly without grounds” (p. 61) leading them to doubt their perceptions, competence, and mental state.

Davis and Ernst (2017) described the societal predispositions toward *whiteness* and *nonwhiteness* as racial gaslighting in America. They noted that the economic and cultural process that normalizes the whiteness, in turn, *pathologizes* those who resist or are different as deviant. An enduring effect of racial gaslighting takes place when unconnected and isolated incidents, or *spectacles*, are used to support specific narratives about a group. Some broader patterns of racial gaslighting are seen in racism and xenophobia toward Japanese Americans after the Pearl Harbor attack and the post-9/11 narratives around Muslim Americans (Davis & Ernst, 2017).

## Antecedents of Gaslighting

### *Gaslighting involves manipulation of information*

Information may comprise truth, half-truths, denial, minimization, lies, concealment, falsification, exaggerations, and dismissiveness. The manipulation of information by the gaslighter may be expressed as scorn, for example, expressing anger or sadness about information, which may compel the gaslightee to avoid accessing or sharing information; marginalization, for example, the gaslighter may put down the opinions that the gaslightee expresses or ignores their opinions that they find undesirable; and isolation, for example, the gaslighter may create physical conditions where the gaslightee finds themselves isolated from others and unable to seek information from sources other than the gaslighters' opinions.

### *Gaslighting is successful when the perpetrators are charismatic*

Marcus (2016) noted that for gaslighting to be successful, the perpetrator must be charming to hold influence over their victims. While some studies described this power as charisma, others equated it with fear (Gavin, 2011). Stern (2007) observed that the gaslighter maintains control, power, and a sense of moral high ground in a relationship because the gaslightee idealizes them and seeks their approval. In the political realm, party leaders and other officeholders tend to hold such charismatic power.

### *Gaslighting is easy when the victim is isolated*

Gaslighting tactics are easy to execute when the gaslightee's sense of reality is based on the information provided by the gaslighter. The altered sense of reality, in turn, may further isolate the gaslightee from others.

## Political Gaslighting

Gaslighting is a political strategy that utilizes deceptive and manipulative use of information, which destabilizes and disorients public opinion on political issues concerning the public. Several types of discourse and actions may constitute political gaslighting, such as lying, hypocrisy, misleading by mischaracterizing or rejecting facts, use of logical fallacies,



and minimizing or deliberate silence on the seriousness of issues that are important to constituents of a politician. The following conceptualization of political gaslighting is based on the review of the literature across a variety of fields.

### *Characteristics of gaslighting*

Although gaslighting is a form of deception, specific characteristics separate it from ordinary deception. First, psychoanalysts find that for gaslighting to be successful, the victims display traits of vulnerability such as fear of uncertainty and the unknown (Hightower, 2017). Second, Abramson (2014) noted that gaslighters are sometimes nondeliberate or unaware of their actions as “they often seem not to have any clear end-in-view; they’re not, that is, trying to drive their targets ‘crazy’” (p. 2). The assertion suggested that gaslighting could also be a subconscious disposition where the gaslighter may be unaware, uninterested, or even unbothered by the outcomes of their actions such as the psychological damage they inflict on their victims. Thus, the predispositions of both the gaslightees and the gaslighters play a role in allowing gaslighting to happen. Third, gaslighting is not an isolated incident of deception, lying, hypocrisy, or misleading; it is a perpetual abusive pattern, whether deliberate or nondeliberate, that causes the gaslightees to slowly slip into overreliance on the perpetrators’ opinions. Last, gaslighting is often invisible to outsiders and the tactics can go on without “concrete acts of abuse, no proofs to show, no solid means of obtaining corroboration that something is wrong” (Kahn & Kellner, 2004, p. 4).

### *Conceptualizing political gaslighting*

Welch (2008) described political gaslighters as the “architects of false reality” (p. 107) and their actions as “an insidious set of psychological manipulations that undermines the mental stability of its victims” (p. 1). While mental instability in public might be a hyperbole, gaslighting influences the viewpoints of voters on political issues and diminishes their decisiveness on important issues.

Political gaslighting contextualizes the political discourse around social justice, freedom of the press, fake news, and other matters (Ahern,

2018; Davis & Ernst, 2017; Fox, 2017; Kovacs, 2017; Stosny, 2017). Duca (2016) wrote a provocative op-ed that suggested that the so-called political upset by Donald Trump was the result of “a terrifying strategy currently being used to weaken and blind the American electorate” (para. 4). Amanda Carpenter, a political strategist and a CNN commentator, published *Gaslighting America: Why We Love It When Trump Lies to Us* to demonstrate political gaslighting by Donald Trump. Carpenter (2018) introduced Donald Trump’s gaslighting tactics as deliberate and deceptive and described him as a line crosser, bulldozer, and a political suicide bomber. Carpenter (2018) noted that Trump’s best defense technique, when criticized or asked a difficult question, has been to dodge the question by sowing the seed of doubt about the legitimacy or credibility of the question.

In political discourse, politicians have used the practice of gaslighting to justify and legitimize objectives such as short-term political goals to long-term national agendas. For example, in postcolonial democracies, governments often manipulate public perceptions to cultivate nation building and patriotism by gaslighting them with recollections of a demonized former monarch. Pakistan is one such country where more than seven decades after decolonization, British rule is blamed for its bureaucratic problems. Similarly, when political upheaval erupts within the country, its military and political disputes with India are frequently used to unite the country. Similarly, in the post-9/11 United States, the Bush administration fueled the “War on Terror” by racialization of American Muslims is the guise of the national security narratives (Chon & Arzt, 2005; Davis & Ernst, 2017; Green, 2011).

It is critical to note that gaslighting is a set of strategic behaviors intended to deceive the public, including discourse, actions, and other behaviors such as distancing tactics that often have little or no consequence individually. Because, as Zaller (1992) suggested, the public looks to their trusted leaders to form opinions on important issues, politicians’ attempt to distance themselves from important issues, ignoring issues, or white-washing facts strategically undermines the importance of these issues in the public mind. Sometimes politicians strategically attempt to divert attention to unrelated issues by giving long-winded replies to questions that may raise more questions than provide answers (Marcus, 2016). For

example, the National Rifle Association's (NRA) response to gun violence often incorporates unrelated narratives such as the Second Amendment freedom and stigmatizing mental illness. Similarly, running negative ads to demonize the opponents can also destabilize and disorient the public opinion. Waldman (2016) used the naked-emperor story to sketch an image of political gaslighting. The story goes that an emperor announced that he would parade through the kingdom wearing a special outfit visible only to the wisest and of noble birth. The emperor paraded through the kingdom; neither his advisors nor the subjects admitted that they do not see the outfit that he claimed to be wearing due to the fear of being taken for unwise or ignoble. This is the case of political gaslighting where the public feels too confused, embarrassed, unqualified, or simply outnumbered to make sound judgments based on their observations and beliefs. Thus, gaslighting strategy alters public perceptions and destabilizes and disorients public opinion.

### *Political gaslighting and climate change science*

Despite the rising awareness of the harms of increasing global warming, many American voters are not making climate change a priority issue on which they make voting decisions during elections. The Yale Program on Climate Change Communication (2018) found that all Republican voters considered climate change a low-priority issue, whereas it was on a spectrum of "very important issue" to "important issue" for all Democrats. Further, 69% of Republicans are still skeptical about the extent of climate change (Brenan & Saad, 2018). Cognitive science research has established that the way people organize and discuss an issue's central idea with others will influence the way they understand the nature of the issue (Maibach, Nisbet, Baldwin, Akerlof, & Diao, 2010). Since the decrease in support for pro-climate behavior is linked to exposure to even a small amount of climate-related conspiratorial information (van der Linden, 2015), it is plausible that when politicians partake in behavior that gaslights voters about global warming, this inevitably hurts voters' support for making climate change a priority.

To establish a correlation between gaslighting on climate change issues and public perception of climate change is outside the scope of this chapter; however, the research will look at whether political gaslighting

about climate change issues took place in the Republican party candidates surrounding the 2016 elections.

### *The House Climate Solutions Caucus*

Representatives Carlos Curbelo (R-FL) and Ted Deutch (D-FL) initiated the first ever bipartisan House caucus on climate change called the Climate Solutions Caucus (CSC) to address policy options regarding the impacts, causes, and challenges from climate change (Citizen's Climate Lobby, 2018). Therefore, we expect that politicians in the group will act and behave in a manner that acknowledges that climate change is real, human caused, serious, and solvable. Indicators of this support would include support for pro-climate policies such as reducing greenhouse gases, reducing human involvement in the greenhouse gases, and supporting the Paris Agreement, which is a comprehensive greenhouse-gas-emission mitigation initiative taken by the United Nations.

The study collected data about whether Republican politicians gaslight voters on climate change issues. By joining the CSC, we assume the Republican politicians established a commitment to pro-climate action; therefore, any discourse that may sow doubts about climate science, holding contrarian beliefs, or obscuring position on climate change science will constitute political gaslighting. Because negative discourse, distancing, and not refuting denialist discourse minimizes the seriousness of climate change, politicians' silence also indicates gaslighting. With that, the following research question was forwarded:

**RQ 1:** Do Republicans who are part of the Climate Solutions Caucus (CSC) engage in gaslighting the public on climate science?

Another dimension of the inquiry is approached with the following hypothesis:

**H1:** Republicans with poor scores in environmental voting records will be more likely to engage in political gaslighting about climate change than Republicans with good environmental voting record.

## METHOD

### Overview

This research comprised content analysis of the behaviors that the Republican Party members of Congress who joined the CSC exhibited concerning climate change during the campaign and after the 2016 election. Content analysis was deemed as the appropriate method to analyze the data, as it helps to identify message characteristics such as ideas, thoughts, and feelings embedded in the discourse (Neuendorf, 2002). Content analysis is also a pragmatic approach to examining how participants reflect these themes in their discussions (Pew Research Center, n.d.). This approach allows the researcher to discern the invisible strategies employed in the discourse such as the deliberate exclusion of information in public discourse and stonewalling climate-related issues.

The sample consisted of Republicans who claim pro-climate attitudes via membership in the Climate Solutions Caucus (CSC). The CSC informs and educates these Congress members on viable ways to reduce climate risks and the associated national interests such as the economy, health, and national security. As of September 2018, the caucus is represented by 90 members, 45 from each party. In order to collect a representative sample, every fifth member was selected from the list of Republican members of CSC for a total of nine members. Each name was searched on the C-SPAN Video Library website, with an additional query “climate change” or “global warming.”

### Procedure

The researcher considered the two years between November 8, 2014, and November 8, 2016, as a manageable time period for research because many candidates start their campaigns two years before an election. However, this limitation was later dropped so sufficient data could be collected. Further, the candidates’ successful election to office was considered an indication that they are persuasive and trusted by their constituents and thus their opinions and behaviors hold credibility in the minds of most of their constituents. The League of Conservation Voters (LCV) is a respected American environmental advocacy group that generates

an annual environmental voting record, the LCV scorecard, for every member of Congress. The LCV scorecard is compiled by a consensus of 20 bipartisan organizations that tally the Congress member's votes on key bills related to environment and conservation. The LCV scorecard was selected as a reliable measure of the members' commitment to environmental policies because it is widely recognized as an unbiased record keeper.

The LCV scorecard provides two types of scores: the percentage of a member's voting record on key issues in the prior year and their voting record during the lifetime of holding the congressional position. The determination of what might constitute a good or a poor voting score was made by a comparison with scorecards of the Democratic members of CSC. Scorecards of a representative sample of nine Democrats on the CSC membership page were averaged to determine "good" as 97% for the 2017 voting score and 92% over the lifetime voting score. Therefore, a score below 50% was determined as a reasonable threshold to be considered as a *poor* score. Next, the scorecard for every member in the sample was compiled. Since members of Congress communicate with their constituents and inform them of their activities via their official congressional websites, the members' official congressional websites were reviewed for climate-related discourse by searching for key words "climate change" or "global warming." In addition, the websites were reviewed for a mention of any pro-climate bills sponsored or cosponsored by the member, press releases concerning climate-related issues, or mention of other pro-climate activities. Additionally, members' names and "climate change" or "global warming" were searched in the C-SPAN Video Library. A similar review of the sample's official Twitter accounts was also done by searching for #climatechange on their Twitter handle. The last step was searching the members' names with the phrases "climate change" or "global warming" in the Google search engine to look for quotes or interviews that have appeared in credible news sources on climate-related issues, such as nationally recognized and local newspapers from within their state.

It is particularly noteworthy that the findings of this research do not represent the sample's entire contribution to pro- or anti-climate discourse. Instead, the findings cover the image that Republican members have projected through the strategic and deliberate media that they

control. These outlets include the official congressional websites, their official Twitter accounts, congressional floor speeches, and published interviews. Since online media stores all information permanently (Latif, 2017), the public can potentially be exposed to any deceptive behaviors of the politicians repeatedly; so negative behavior on climate change will constitute political gaslighting.

Since little or no far-reaching outcomes emerge from small-scale, localized pro-climate efforts (Maibach et al., 2010), pro-climate attitude rests on two significant determinants: the acknowledgement that climate change is a global problem and that meaningful climate change mitigation will come from reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Because the CSC educates and informs its members on the latest scientific research on climate science, it is reasonable to expect that the politicians' views should also reflect science-driven solutions backed by facts, such as that climate change is real, it is happening, it is caused by man-made greenhouse gases, and it can be reversed.

The researcher developed a grounded coding schema to analyze the content from various sources. These codes were compiled from a prior review of the climate change communication literature and were then further refined throughout the coding process.

## RESULTS

The research question posed in the study was whether Republicans who belong to the CSC engage in political gaslighting on climate science. Tables 2.1 and 2.2 show evidence of different ways in which gaslighting was observed. Table 2.1 demonstrates discourse that is contradictory to the cause and purpose of the CSC. Table 2.2 demonstrates actions and distancing behaviors, which also constitutes gaslighting. For example, no Republican member except one in the sample mentioned sponsoring a pro-climate bill on their official congressional website. Therefore, either not participating in pro-climate activities or strategically withholding information of their involvement in pro-climate initiatives indicates a gaslighting attempt. Similarly, only two members mention their membership in the CSC on their congressional websites; others chose to remain

TABLE 2.1 *Anti-Climate Change Discourse*

<i>Negative/Disparaging Speech</i>	Explicitly or implicitly denouncing: climate policies or actions; the Kyoto Protocol or the Paris climate accord, such as “The preposterous Paris climate agreement”; anti-climate-change sentiments; use of words such as “hoax,” “trickery,” and “climate science mumbo-jumbo”
“Things like Cap-n-Trade really bug me because it’s government intrusion with very sketchy science.” (Appendix C, L. 157)	
<i>Denialist Attitude or Behavior</i>	Denying climate change as a real problem; undermining the reality and seriousness of climate change; supporting leaving the Paris climate accord; dismissing damage caused by CO <sub>2</sub> to the environment; dismissing the role of regulatory bodies such as the EPA
“I was just curious and I asked how many Ice Ages does this Earth have been through, I mean, <b>everything I can gather minimum of three and maximum some say five to seven</b> but I just want to know how many ice ages do you think we have gone through?” (Appendix C, L. 207)	
“These things are <b>going from eons, and they will continue to go on for eons.</b> ” (Appendix C, L. 219–220)	
<i>Conspiratorial Discourse or False Controversy</i>	References to known and unknown conspiracies such as “climate gate”; suggestive sentiments such as “We all know what happened then”
“Having companies disclose information on immaterial issues like <b>climate is highly speculative and dubious at the very best.</b> ” (Appendix C, L. 186–188)	
“ <b>There was a threat that we’re going to have a cooling that’s going to eventually freeze the planet that was the fear we had before Gore invented the internet or you know, you know the other terms.</b> ” (Appendix C, L. 249–251)	
“ <b>I read that during the period of the dinosaurs the Earth temperature 30 degrees warmer.</b> ” (Appendix C, L. 251–252)	
<i>Intensed Demeanor</i>	Tone, volume, speaking over others, angry facial expressions, use of fighting words such as “the corrupt Democrats”
“States attorneys tend to impede the First Amendment right of <b>those who dare question the accuracy of climate change science.</b> ” (Appendix C, L. 176–177)	
<b>Speaking over and Interrupts. “I am running out of time.”</b> (Appendix C, L. 215)	



<i>Blaming</i>	Blaming scientists, the Democrats, advocacy groups, the public, the international community “We need to have more incentives in our conversation with <b>China and India and other countries that are much worse as far as their air pollution than we are.</b> ” (Appendix C, L. 152–153)
<i>Deflection and Countertheories to Truth</i>	Excuses and presenting counter theories to established truth; conflating climate change with other issues such as coal industry, jobs, infrastructure “I’m concerned with <b>the amount of money and the impact on our productivity</b> that we’re having focused on climate change <b>when really I think we have very little direct impact on that.</b> ” (Appendix C, L. 140–142)
<i>Defeatist Attitude</i>	Helpless or hopeless attitude; referring to environmental phenomenon as “God’s wrath”; the previous administration’s bad decisions; lamenting the high cost of pro-climate actions “ <b>I’m concerned with the amount of money and the impact on our productivity</b> that we’re having focused on climate change when really I think <b>we have very little direct impact on that.</b> ” (Appendix C, L. 140–142) “For us to think that we can unilaterally affect all climate or all environment is crazy.” (Appendix C, L. 151–152)
<i>Minimizing Harm</i>	Isolating climate change from related issues such as health; prioritizing coal industry jobs, the economy, national security “We had to have warming periods each one of those and so that is <b>a natural phenomenon</b> and you <b>just because we are alive now the tectonic plate shifts aren’t going to stop that hurricanes aren’t going to stop, the asteroids aren’t going to stop.</b> ” (Appendix C, L. 216–218)

TABLE 2.2 Results

Name	LCV Scorecard 2017 Overall (%)	Mentions CSC Membership	Climate Change Support on Official Website		Number of Pro-Climate Bills Sponsored	Climate Discourse in C-SPAN Video Library	Twitter #climatechange	
			Positive	Negative				
Mark Amodei	6	3	No	0	1	0	No results found	0
Dave Reichert	29	36	No	10	0	1	No results found	4 pro-climate
Peter King	11	17	No	0	0	0	No results found	0
Scott Taylor	6	6	Yes	0	1	0	No results found	8 negative comments
Ed Royce	9	11	No	0	0	0	No results found	0
Matt Gaetz	6	6	No	0	0	0	No results found	1 pro-climate
Randy Hultgren	0	5	No	0	0	0	No results found	0
Bill Posey	0	5	No	0	0	0	Yes. Negative discourse	0
Francis Rooney	0	0	Yes	10	0	0	No results found	0

silent about it while they may have flaunted their membership in other caucuses and groups that are typically expected of a Republican Congress member, such as veteran affairs and the NRA.

The hypothesis advanced in the study that suggested that Republicans with poor scores in environmental voting records will be more likely to engage in political gaslighting about climate change than Republicans with a good environmental voting record was inconclusive. Because the average LCV score of a similarly gathered sample of Democrats was 92% over the lifetime and 97% for 2017, below 50% was determined to be a poor score. No Republican politician in the sample had earned a good LCV score. Among the sample, the highest LCV score was earned by Dave Reichert with 29% for 2017 and 36% over the lifetime, which still did not rise to the preselected 50% LCV score threshold.

## DISCUSSION

David Leonhardt of *The New York Times* noted in a 2018 op-ed that Senator Marco Rubio's harsh opposition to recounting Florida votes in the 2018 midterm election was "to change the results of election" (para. 4). Leonhardt (2018) found Rubio's inflammatory Tweets dangerous and called his deceptive language "Trumpified." He explained:

I want to walk you through those falsehoods this morning. They're important to debunk, because Rubio is doing something dangerous: Deliberately undermining people's confidence in our electoral systems for partisan gain. . . . Rubio has chosen to employ a classic tool of autocrats. He is using the language of democracy to subvert democracy. (para. 3 & 11)

Deliberate deception and manipulation of information is neither a novel idea nor restricted to politicians alone. Countries to corporations leverage big data, artificial intelligence, and black box algorithms to control information by strategically restricting or supplying it to the public (Howard et al., 2017). But, I use Leonhardt's article to demonstrate two facts. First, as human communication has become more complicated,

more cognitively complex concepts are needed to understand it. To that end, this type of deception can be succinctly captured using the term *political gaslighting*. Second, political gaslighting can and should be exposed once identified, as it exacts a considerable toll on society and democracy due to these manipulations. Therefore, this chapter conceptualized and defined political gaslighting to draw a link to its possible harmful consequences.

So, a question now arises: What is the difference between political gaslighting and ordinary deception? Deception is the deliberate attempt to alter the target's belief system via ambiguous or vague messages (Buller & Burgoon, 1994), whereas political gaslighting is a strategy that utilizes deceptive and manipulative use of information with the motivation to destabilize and disorient public opinion on political issues. Thus, political gaslighting is a strategy used to garner support for or against an ideology, viewpoint, or policy. However, political gaslighting threatens democracy when it targets groups, communities, and large populations to prevent them from forming sound judgments on important policies. Political gaslighting potentially harms the public's ability to influence policies that affect their short-term and long-term well-being. In this manner, political gaslighting harms the democratic process. In the case of climate change policy, political gaslighting can have serious consequences as the entrusted politicians' gaslighting strategy undermines the urgency with which climate change interventions are needed to prevent the imminent climate decline.

It is also unwise to dismiss the tense political context in which climate change communication takes place. Much of climate change discourse utilizes populist discourse. For example, Senator Jim Inhofe (R-OK; 2012), a well-known climate change skeptic, sketches an image of the frightened "mothers in the grocery store" who divulge to him their worry over children being indoctrinated in schools about climate change, asserting that climate change is a political issue of the elites and that ordinary citizens are neither concerned nor affected by it.

To identify the characteristics of political gaslighting, a research question was put forward about whether the Republicans in the CSC showed commitment to the mission of the caucus by exploring policy

options that address the impacts, causes, and challenges of climate change. Many Republican members of the caucus continued to earn poor LCV scores even after joining the caucus. One must then question whether being part of the caucus is merely for positive optics, or are there favorable attitude changes toward proposing policies for solving climate change? The results suggested that the sample Republicans in the CSC frequently gaslighted constituents about climate science by mischaracterizing or rejecting facts, using logical fallacies, minimizing, or deliberately keeping their silence. It is then not surprising that the legitimacy of the CSC is often questioned. Critics further object that some Republicans with low scores such as Ed Royce (R-CA), who has called for the dismantling of the EPA, are “unlikely inclusions” to the CSC and that Republicans are “joining the caucus in an attempt to greenwash their resumes and appeal to moderate voters” (Becktold, 2017). In fact, prominent climate policy proponent R. L. Miller of the Climate Hawks Vote PAC considers the caucus dangerous because Democrats allow a political cover for Republicans who are not committed to protecting the climate (Colman, 2018).

Moreover, critics question the intentions of Carlos Curbelo (R-FL) as one of the founders of the CSC, who only scored 23% on LCV’s 2017 scorecard (33% overall score). Further, it was evident in the discourse that members in the sample supported climate change policies to the extent that the policies affected their constituents. For example, Francis Rooney (R-FL) stated, “I joined the Climate Solutions Caucus because environmental issues are critical for our Southwest Florida community” whose record reflected voting on policy changes that affected Florida (Berardi, 2018).

Since the average score of a sample of Democrats was 92% over the lifetime and 97% for 2017, below a 50% score was determined to be a poor score. Thus, the hypothesis that Republicans with poor LCV scores will engage in more gaslighting than those with good LCV score turned out inconclusive because no Republican in the sample had a good LCV score. Note that a score of 50% translates to only supporting half of the pro-climate legislation. The highest score was earned by Dave Reichert with a 29% LCV score for 2017 and a 36% lifetime LCV score.

Interestingly, it is evident that there is little if any difference in the views of the Republican members of the CSC since they joined the caucus. For example, examining two interviews with Bill Posey, one from before he joined the CSC and one afterward, both interviews are laden with similar anti-climate-change discourse. Therefore, continued use of contrarian discourse indicated that there has not been much change in the views of some members of Congress about climate change.

Although the sample did not attempt to provide evidence of a correlation between a member of Congress's LCV score and gaslighting attempts, the data showed that there is a more pro-climate discourse on the part of Dave Reichert, who has the highest LCV score, than other Republican Congress members in the sample.

The discussion of political gaslighting attempts should not in any way suggest that the audience is passive in the communicative process. In fact, during the research, I came across several instances when Twitter followers called out the politicians on their taciturn dispositions on climate-related issues. Twitter followers, many of them private citizens, asked the Republican politicians to make public statements and to be clear about their response to climate-related issues. Some followers even shared provocative photos such as of them rowing in flooded streets to get a reaction from the politicians.

It is noteworthy that in political gaslighting attempts there may be two distinct victims: the public who is being gaslighted and those holding opposing views. For example, to deceive the public on climate science, politicians may undermine the credibility of those who hold opposing views such as climate change scientists by damaging their reputations (Nelson, Gwiasda, & Lyons, 2011). Political gaslighters may also use other tactics, such as silencing researchers to undermine their research—for example, when the EPA was forced to urge staff to downplay climate change (Milman, 2018). It is thus reasonable to believe that political gaslighting is a tactic used in the character assassination of opponents. In fact, in the 2016 election, Republicans and Democrats both surpassed expenditures on negative campaigns than positive campaigns (Blake, 2016). In this way, political gaslighting may be an undesired side effect of character attacks.

## CONCLUSION

Gaslighting in political discourse is not a new strategy, but this type of communication is dangerous and needs further examination. Because the conceptualization of gaslighting is adopted from case studies in clinical psychology, the literature provides idiosyncratic descriptions of the gaslighter, gaslightee, and the context in which it takes place. Future research should include quantitative and qualitative approaches to elaborate political gaslighting and draw correlations between the public's decision-making ability and exposure to gaslighting.

Communication scientists often consider ignorance of climate change science in the public as the main culprit contributing to climate change communication difficulties. However, more emphasis should be placed on the public's ability to consume and engage with information, because this vulnerability in the public allows politicians to construct populist narratives and stringent attitudes toward climate issues. Thus, future studies should also focus on best response strategies that the public can adopt, such as narrative repair strategies. For example, inoculation theory is a practical narrative repair strategy that uses deceptive information in small doses to elaborate the unlikelihood of such narratives being true. Similarly, Rowan (1991) suggests the use of *transformative explanations* to remove misconceptions in difficult-to-understand concepts.

A technical shortfall of the research is that the queries on C-SPAN, Twitter, and the Internet were run using keywords "climate change" and "global warming," which is a limited search as climate change may be discussed as an issue-based discussion such as ocean acidification, famine, drought, and so on. However, doing so might have diluted the initial query about whether the policy makers who are part of the CSC are making a meaningful impact on climate by supporting policies that are good for the climate and not just focusing on issues that are impacting their constituents. Moreover, the research was developed with an assumption that significant data will be available on the C-SPAN Video Library and in other places. That assumption was premature, especially considering that gaslighting includes the tactic of distancing and deliberate silence on important issues.

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The LCV score cards were last verified on September 7, 2018. Current and future LCV scores will look different than those indicated here. In addition, the official congressional websites of the members of Congress were also verified on the same date. The websites may indicate changes since or may not exist anymore due to congress member no longer being in the office.

## NOTES

1. A Eurasian art collective.
2. “German literary movement of the late 18th century that exalted nature, feeling, and human individualism and sought to overthrow the Enlightenment cult of Rationalism” (britannica.com, 2018).

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# CHAPTER 3

## EXPLORING THE ORAL HISTORIES OF AFRICAN AMERICANS WHO SUPPORT DONALD TRUMP

*Ray Block Jr. and Christina S. Haynes*

### INTRODUCTION

*I have a great relationship with the Blacks. I've always had a good relationship with the Blacks.*

—DONALD TRUMP, SPEAKING ON THE TALK1300 RADIO SHOW IN  
NEW YORK, NY, APRIL 14, 2011 (EMPHASIS ADDED)

Donald J. Trump says controversial things. It is part of his brassy, braggadocious,<sup>1</sup> and belligerent rhetorical style, and he made that style a mainstay of his unprecedented and unexpectedly successful campaign (Ahmadian, Azarshahi, & Paulhus, 2017; Block & Negrine, 2017; Hall, Goldstein, & Ingram, 2016; Healy & Haberman, 2015; Hochschild, 2016; Oliver & Rahn, 2016; Ott, 2017; Rundle, 2016; Savoy, 2017; Sclafani, 2017). While his June 3, 2016, comments during a campaign rally in Redding, California, were not the worst things he has ever said about people of color (see Huber, 2016; Kivel, 2017; Park, 2017),<sup>2</sup> they were particularly telling. When reminiscing about an incident at a previous rally in Arizona involving a Black Trump supporter striking a White anti-Trump protester,

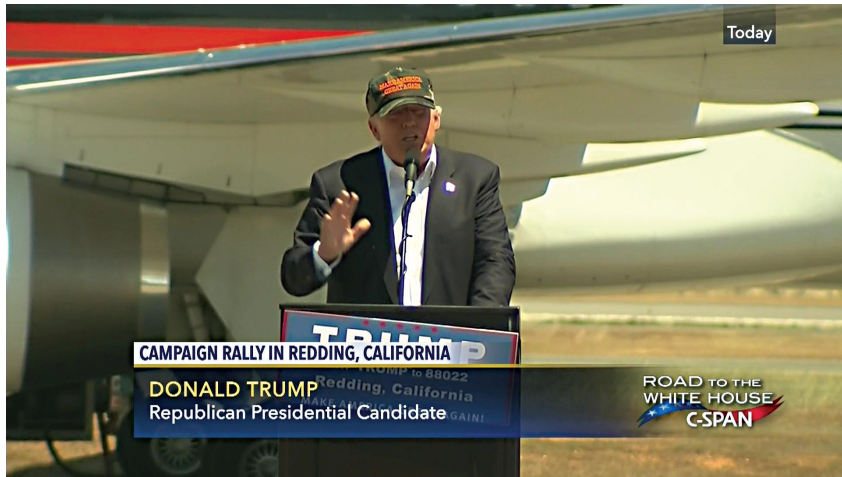


FIGURE 3.1 Candidate Donald Trump campaigning in Redding, CA.

then-candidate Trump compliments the man who threw the punch. While doing so, Trump stops midsentence as his train of thought shifts, scans the audience, points enthusiastically at Gregory Cheadle, one of the few African Americans in attendance, and yells: “Look at my African American over here! Look at him! Are you the greatest?!” The presumptive GOP nominee received a round of applause, and Cheadle described his experience at the rally—a snapshot of which appears in Figure 3.1—as being “surreal” (Corasaniti, 2016).

We take issue with much of the goings-on at Trump rallies, but there are four things about what happened in Redding that we find especially problematic. The first of which is the specter of violence that seems to follow these campaign events. Recall that the Black man in Arizona Trump speaks so fondly of was in the act of hurting someone. By calling that man a “great guy,” Trump tacitly condones the attacks performed in his honor by his “passionate” followers (Boyette, 2016; Moyer, 2015). Booker (2016) points out that Trump also boasted of his benevolence to the Black man, acknowledging that this assaulter would have been waylaid by other White rallygoers (who might have mistaken the Black man for a protestor and not a supporter) had Trump not intervened. The insinuation is that there would have been more violence, and perhaps more cheering, if Trump wanted the fighting to continue, for the future president earned



a reputation for encouraging audience members to retaliate against his critics (Jacobson & Tobias, 2017; Sommers-Dawes, 2016).

Second, the use of the possessive determiner “my” in front of the term “African American” is ill chosen, if not racially insensitive (Simon, 2018). As shown in the epigraph, Trump makes other questionable wording choices when talking about race, and people had similar misgivings about his habit of calling African Americans “the Blacks,” (e.g., Parker, 2018). The linguistic practice of adding a definite article when referring to racial or ethnic minorities betrays Trump’s unfamiliarity (and perhaps discomfort) with members of those demographic groups and, in some cases, his desire to create distance between himself and the minorities being mentioned. Worse yet, this group-labeling practice essentializes as it otherizes: implying that Trump believes minorities occupy monolithic sociocultural spaces that are fundamentally unlike his own (Abadi, 2016; King & Stewart, 2016).

On a third and related note, we wonder if Trump understood that the person he was talking to in California was not the “great guy” who decked an anti-Trump protestor in Arizona. To be fair, this was not completely Trump’s fault. Cheadle admits that he was holding a large “Veterans for Trump” sign that simultaneously shielded him from the sun and made him easier to locate. The sign-toting attendee also egged the candidate on by shouting “I’m here!” while Trump searched the audience for the African American in question—a joke that won Cheadle an autograph after the rally (Barabak, 2017). Even so, it is odd that Trump would expect people from Arizona to be in the crowd in California, and by likening Cheadle to someone else, Trump either thinks these two men (and possibly all African Americans) resemble one another, or he knows the men are different and simply does not care because it would be “good optics” for his campaign if he is seen with a supportive Black person, regardless of who that person is.

Finally, the irony is not lost upon us that Cheadle—who describes himself as a racially progressive “Lincoln Republican” (Philpot, 2007)—does not consider himself to be one of Trump’s African Americans. In fact, Cheadle’s decision to attend the rally in his hometown was less about backing Trump and more about seizing an opportunity while satisfying a curiosity: he was himself running for political office (losing to incumbent Doug

LaMalfa in the June 2018 election for the chance to represent California's first congressional district) and went to the rally to pass out fliers and meet constituents while watching a major candidate in action (Barabak, 2017). For similar reasons, Cheadle also went to Bernie Sanders's rally in the nearby city of Chico weeks before (Booker, 2016). Cheadle did not cast a ballot for Trump during the primaries, and he regrets voting party-line during the general election. His objection was not with the president's rhetoric but with his broken promises to help communities of color: "Why can't he go to a Black city? Why can't he trumpet Black business? Why can't he have more Black people in his administration?" (Haltiwanger, 2017). Cheadle is outspoken about both his race-centered policy agenda<sup>3</sup> and his disappointment in Trump, and that disappointment stems from the fact that the Californian running for Congress has a highly developed sense of racial identity. In this sense, Cheadle helps us to understand the racial dynamics at work among African American voters who are (or were) Trump supporters. Specifically, these dynamics beg the following questions: Who are these Black Trump voters, and why did they cast their ballots for him?

We address these questions below. By merging the framework of Darity, Mason, and Stewart (2006) with insights from Dawson (1994)—and, more recently, White, Laird, and Allen (2014), Laird (2017, 2018) and Laird, McConnaughty, Wamble, and White (n.d.)—we develop a theory regarding the impact of racial norms on Black political behavior. Specifically, to borrow the terminology of Darity, Mason, and Stewart (2006) and Mason (2017), we conceive of voting decisions as taking place within a "racialized economy" in which Trump support is widely and strongly viewed as a deviation from established norms, and the likelihood of a Black person casting a Trump ballot represents that individual's willingness to "defect" from intragroup cooperation. To evaluate the empirical implications of this theoretical model, we evidence from a handful of oral histories of Black Trump supporters that were archived in the C-SPAN Video Library.

In this chapter, we explore the interconnections between race, gender, political orientation, and Trump support. We begin by developing a theory in which we characterize "Blacks for Trump" as African Americans who are defecting from racial/political norms. Next, we provide details about the research design in general, and our qualitative analyses of C-SPAN

video footage in particular. We then discuss our findings, for our research on Black Trump support reveals interplay between in-group racial identity and right-wing political orientation. We conclude the chapter by acknowledging implications of our project. For example, while recent scholarship shows that the heightened salience of racial in-group identity contributed to Trump support among White voters (see Inglehart & Norris, 2016; Major, Blodorn, & Major Blascovich, 2018; Newman, Shah, & Collingwood, 2018; Pettigrew, 2017), our research contributes to the literature on race and turnout by demonstrating that decreased racial identity is associated with Trump voting among African Americans.

## RACIAL IDENTITY, POLITICAL ORIENTATION, AND BLACKS' TRUMP SUPPORT

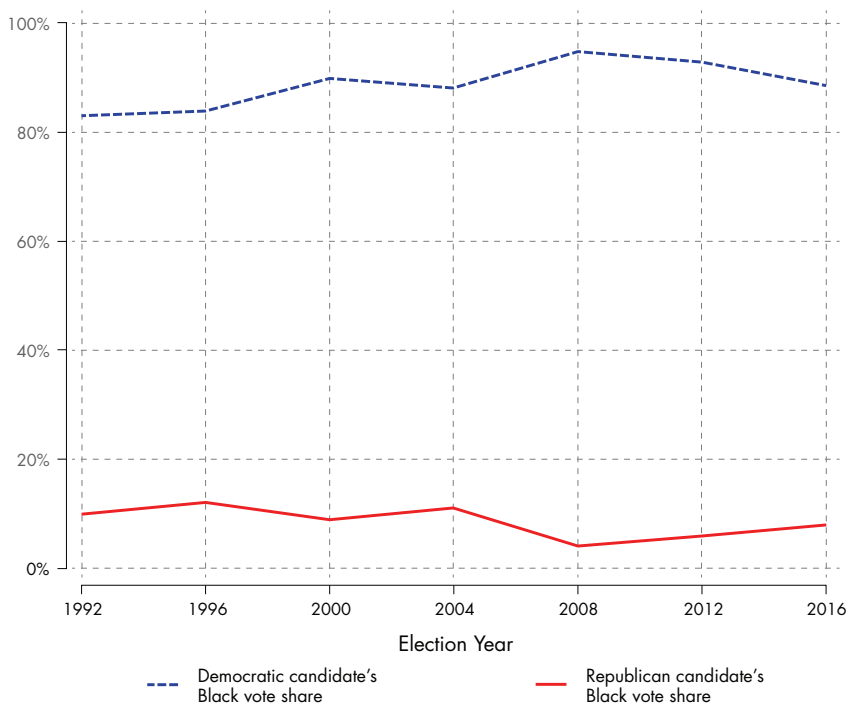
### *The State of the Literature on the "Trump Vote"*

There are many reasons why voters support Trump (Pettigrew, 2017). Here, we focus on those reasons that pertain, even if indirectly, to racial identity. For example, the conventional wisdom about the 2016 presidential election is that "racial considerations" (to borrow a phrase from Hutchings and Valentino [2004]) were major factors motivating Whites' Trump support. These considerations take many forms, ranging from outright expressions of bigotry and white supremacy to the fear wrought by demographic shifts that witness to the "browning" of the nation. For example, Fitzduff (2017) has an edited volume linking votes for Trump to the degree to which Whites are attached to their racial in-group (see also Myers 2017). Others attribute the Trump vote to the extent to which Whites are antagonistic toward members of out-groups (Huber, 2016; Lopez, 2017; Newman et al., 2018; Swain, 2018). In their studies of the rise of far-right extremist groups in the United States and the United Kingdom, Bhambra (2017), Gusterson (2017) and Inglehart and Norris (2016) credit Trump's success to his ability to exploit a growing wave of race-based populism fueled by the increased adherence to the ideology of White Nationalism. Recent work discusses Trump voting in terms of racialized zero-sum perceptions in which Whites feel economically and culturally threatened by the gains being made by persons of color (Collingwood, Reny, & Valenzuela, 2017; Major et al., 2018). In short, the

literature suggests that race governs Whites' support for Trump: Whites who value the racial status quo were inclined to cast Trump votes, and the presidents' rhetoric reinforced these sentiments among White voters.

We know from past research that racial considerations tend also to influence African Americans' voting decisions. This finding persists regardless of whether scholars are focusing on voter turnout (see Chong & Rogers, 2005; Dawson, Brown, & Allen, 1990; McKee, Hood, & Hill, 2012; Philpot, Shaw, & McGowen, 2009; Tate, 1991) or candidate preference (e.g., Block, 2011; Block & Onwunli, 2010; Philpot & Walton, 2007; Tate, 1994). Most relevant to our purposes is the fact that racial considerations, broadly defined, mattered greatly to Black voters during the 2016 presidential election (Collins & Block, 2018; Griffin, Teixeira, & Halpin, 2017). Despite the richness of our understanding of race and voting behavior, conversations about the impact of racial considerations on Blacks' Trump support are conspicuously absent from this literature. It is tempting to dismiss this paucity of "Blacks for Trump"<sup>4</sup> research on numeric terms, saying, for example, that few people study this because few African Americans voted for Trump. However, according to exit polls, Trump received between 8% and 12% of the Black vote, which is consistent with previous Republican candidates for presidential elections. As Figure 3.2 shows, Mitt Romney (who got 7% of his support from African Americans) and John McCain (for whom 4% of Blacks voted), did worse among Black voters, arguably because they both ran against Barack H. Obama, the nation's first self-identified<sup>5</sup> African American to make it out of the primaries, let alone win serve in the White House. Obama's historic candidacy and two-term presidency corresponds with two of the highest Black vote shares ever earned by a Democratic nominee (95% in 2008 and 93% in 2012).

The uniqueness of Obama's presidency is further highlighted by the fact that, from 1980 to 2004, GOP candidates tended to earn 8% to 12% of the Black vote—the same vote share range that Trump won (Kiely, 2016). It is surprising that Trump's vote-share among African Americans looks so "typical"<sup>6</sup> considering the racially divisive campaign he ran. Also surprising is the gender gap within this racial group. Exit Poll results in Table 3.1 show that, for Black women, the vote breakdown across candidates was 94% to 4% in favor of Hillary Clinton (2% of these voters were undecided or chose another candidate). For Black men, the pro-Clinton trend



**FIGURE 3.2** Trends in the Black vote shares earned by presidential candidates. (Compiled for 1992 through 2016 from the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies using a variety of sources.)

*Note:* Estimates are the percentage of African American voters who supported the Democratic (solid line) or Republican (dashed line) presidential candidates.

**TABLE 3.1** *Exit Poll Results (Within-Race Gender Gap)*

<i>2016 presidential election</i>				
	Clinton	Trump	Other	Total
<i>Black women (%)</i>	94	4	2	100
<i>Black men (%)</i>	82	13	5	100
<i>2012 presidential election</i>				
	Obama	Romney	Other	Total
<i>Black women (%)</i>	96	3	1	100
<i>Black men (%)</i>	87	11	2	100

Data sources: <http://www.cnn.com/election/2012/results/race/president/> and <https://www.cnn.com/election/2016/results/exit-polls>

is less lopsided at 82% versus 13% (with 5% “other” or “undecided”). While recent survey evidence confirms that Black men were the second most committed voting bloc for Democrats in 2016,<sup>7</sup> these within-race gender differences are important. In his electoral college victory over Hillary Clinton, the president won over a nontrivial number of African American voters, particularly African American men.

This absence of research on “Blacks for Trump” is particularly troubling if we consider that we should expect racial differences in the motivations for casting Trump ballots. After all, several scholars confirmed that the theories and statistical models used to understand Black voter turnout are not the same as the ones used to explore Whites’ political behavior (Bobo & Gilliam, 1990; Dawson, 1994, 2001, 2011; Walters, 1988; Walton, 1985). Moreover, research by Avery (2006, 2007, 2009) and Leighley and Vedlitz (1999) demonstrates that the impact of common determinants of political participation (such as interest in politics, trust in government, political efficacy, etc.) also vary by race. We therefore expect to observe racial differences in the ways that racial considerations influence Trump support. Specifically, while they are presumably positively related to Trump voting among White people, we anticipate that racial considerations are inversely associated to Trump support among African Americans: rather than signaling an adherence to racial norms (as is the case with White voters), Trump votes by Black people represent a desire to defect away from in-group norms. Below, we explain why we expect racial differences in the impact of racial norms on Trump voting.

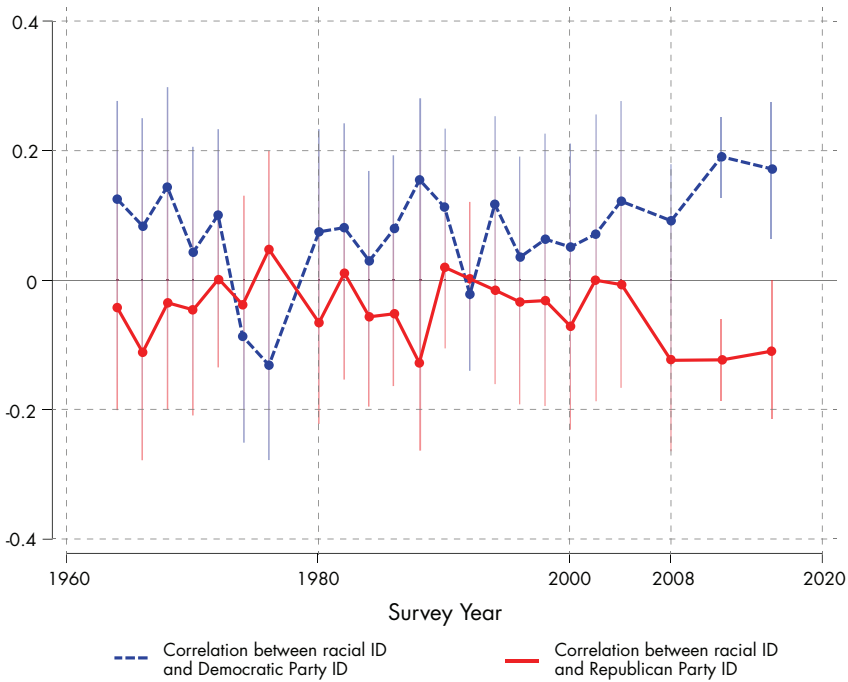
### **Political Orientation and In-Group Identification as Proxy Variables for Racial Norms**

To make sense of Blacks’ support of Trump, we start by exploring a person’s preexisting political beliefs. For example, consider partisanship, a common indicator of these predisposition (which we refer to here as factoring into a person’s “orientation” to politics). African Americans lend nearly unanimous support to the Democratic Party, and they have done so for decades. There are numerous studies confirming this pattern, but Haynie and Watts (2010) say it best when they note that “Blacks are not only overwhelmingly Democratic in their partisan identification, they also consistently vote for Democratic candidates by overwhelming margins in

elections at all levels” (p. 93). In addition to their ideology and policy preferences, Black people’s “overwhelming” support for the Democratic Party reflects their suspicion of the Republican Party. After all, Republicans have been comparatively less responsive to African American issues since the realignment of the mid-1960s (see Tate, 1994; Dawson, 1994; Philpot, 2007, 2017). Tesler and Sears (2010) argue that anti-Black attitudes, stoked by Obama’s victory in 2008, produced a second realignment in which racial tensions push Black voters further away from the Republican Party while enticing some racially conservative Whites to join the GOP and support its candidates and platforms (see also Powers, 2014).<sup>8</sup> Readers can disagree over how many realignments have taken place in America, but it is clear that there are enduring racial divisions in party identification (Carmines & Stimson, 1990; Fauntroy, 2007; Layman, Carsey, & Horowitz, 2006; Philpot, 2007; Walton, Smith, & Wallace, 2017).

By displaying data from the 1952 through 2016 American National Election Studies (ANES), Figure 3.3 provides further evidence of the connection between race and political orientation in the United States. Specifically, we compare the correlations between African Americans’ party affiliation and their affinity toward members of their racial group, using feeling thermometer scores as a standard measure of the latter concept (Axt, 2018; Schuman, Steeh, Bobo, & Krysan, 1997; Wong & Cho, 2005) and dummy variables for Democrat (blue dots and lines) and Republican (red-colored estimates) self-identification to gauge the former. While the trends fluctuate over time, a consistent pattern emerges between 1976 and 1980 and becomes consolidated after 2008: being a Democrat is positively associated with the degree to which Black people feel a sense of “closeness” toward other African Americans, while identifying with the Republican Party is negatively related to racial in-group affinity. The 95% confidence intervals around the coefficients for Black Democrats and Republicans are above and below zero (marked by a horizontal line that splits the figure at the vertical axis), respectively, and, because the error bands do not overlap, the polarization in the post-2008 correlations is statistically significant.

These patterns comport with Laird’s (2018) observation that “Democratic partisanship has become significantly tied to Black identity in the United States.” In our case, the link between measures of racial identification and political orientation among Black voters may have started with the election



**FIGURE 3.3** Democratic partisanship has become significantly linked to Black identity. (Data source: 1964 through 2016 American National Election Studies (ANES) Time Series surveys.)

*Note:* Estimates are bivariate correlation coefficients (dots) with 95% confidence intervals (vertical lines). We used connector lines to illustrate changes over time in the correlation between feeling thermometer ratings of African Americans (our measure of Blacks' "racial identification") and (our variable tapping into "party identification").

of Reagan in 1980, but they certainly crystalized after Barack Obama's historic presidential election. The finding that political orientation is significantly correlated with racial identity is also consistent with the idea that Democratic Party identification has become particularly relevant as an indicator of African Americans' commitment to racial norms.

For the purposes of our chapter, *norms* are widely held expectations among African Americans' regarding politics, policies, and politicians. Research in economics confirms the importance of political orientation as a normalized form of African American political behavior (see Darity, Mason, & Stewart, 2006) and political scientists advancing similar arguments include Abrajano and Hajnal (2015), Dawson (1994, 2001) and Mangum (2013). Research by White and his colleagues provide direct tests of the policing power of racial norms. Specifically, White, Laird, and



Allen (2014) use campaign donation experiments to demonstrate that race-specific social pressure shapes Black people's decision to seek political outcomes that favor group solidarity over self-interests. Laird et al. (n.d.) further demonstrate the importance of racial-group social interactions by showing that African American respondents in face-to-face surveys tend to express stronger allegiance to the Democratic Party when they are in the presence of Black interviewers.

Of relevance to us, Table 3.2 demonstrates that the "norm" among African Americans is to be skeptical of Trump and his politics. The data for this table come from a public opinion survey conducted in the summer of 2016 by the African American Research Collaborative (AARC) and sponsored by the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). This poll targeted registered voters in highly competitive midterm election races, across 61 congressional districts in the United States ( $N = 2,045$ ), and the survey is unique because it contains oversamples of African Americans ( $n = 400$ ) and Whites ( $n = 400$ ). The top portion of Table 3.2 lists the percentage of Black and White respondents who said "yes" to the following statement: "Donald Trump (because of the kind of person he is or because of something he has said or done) has made me feel this way: disrespected." The second portion of the table records whether respondents agree with the following statement: "Some people have said Donald Trump's racist statements and policies will cause a major setback to the progress made in recent years by [Black] communities." The final portion shows the percent of respondents who select the following statement as matching their opinion: "Trump is a racist whose policies are intended to hurt African Americans." We sort responses by both race and gender, and the evidence is clear: Black people (especially Black women) tend to view much of Trump's rhetoric, most of his governing agenda, and several of his surrogates as constituting racial threats (Barreto & Parker, n.d.; Coats, 2017; Parker & Barreto, 2013).

Taken together, the work on racial norms lends further credence to the idea that African Americans consider it to be a form of "racial defection" to vote Republican (and, presumably, against the collective interests of their in-group). This logic of racialized defection applies well to the current political context, for there is clear evidence that many (if not most) African Americans view President Trump and his administration as being

TABLE 3.2 *African Americans’ Tendency to View Donald Trump in Racially Antagonistic Terms*

Has Donald Trump—because of the kind of person he is or because of something he has done or said—ever made you feel: Disrespected? (% “Yes”)				
Full sample (%)	Black respondents (%)		White respondents (%)	
	Female	Male	Female	Male
59	89	74	57	44
Some people have said Donald Trump’s racist statements and policies will cause a major setback to the progress made in recent years by [Black] communities. Do you agree or disagree? (% “Somewhat agree” + % “Strongly agree”)				
Full sample (%)	Black respondents (%)		White respondents (%)	
	Female	Male	Female	Male
59	83	71	58	44
People have different opinions about Donald Trump’s impact on [Blacks]. Which is closest to your opinion: Trump is a racist whose policies are intended to hurt African Americans. (% who believe this statement matches their opinion)				
Full sample (%)	Black respondents (%)		White respondents (%)	
	Female	Male	Female	Male
38	63	42	38	26

Source: NAACP/AARC July 2018 Midterm Survey (*N* = 2,045 total; *n* = 400 per racial/ethnic group).

antagonistic toward racial progress. Given Black America’s strong reaction against Trump, it stands to reason that Black people who support the 45th president are choosing to operate outside the boundaries of established racial norms.<sup>9</sup> Below, we develop a racial-norm theory about the impact of our key predictors (political orientation and racial in-group identification) on our outcome of interest (Trump voting) among African Americans.

RACIAL NORMS AS MOTIVATORS OF TRUMP SUPPORT

If the norm is for African Americans to not support the GOP in general and Trump in particular, then “defection” in this context would be for Black people to knowingly transgress this racial/political norm. In this section, we argue that African Americans’ Trump support stems, at least in part, from their decreased commitment to racial/political norms and their increased willingness to defect from those norms. Recall that the

concepts of political orientation and in-group racial identification can function as proxies for a person's adherence to racial norms. In Table 3.3, we organize Black Trump supporters according to these proxy concepts.<sup>10</sup> For simplicity's sake, the categories of this 2-by-2 table characterize supporters as exhibiting either "low" or "high" levels of both pro-Black racial identification and right-wing political orientation.<sup>11</sup> For example, the upper left-hand quadrant of this table represents those African Americans who support Trump because they are to borrow Harriot's (2018) phrasing, "opportunistic." These are people who, in addition to being beholden to any political party or ideology, are also not guided primarily by racial considerations. For the *Entrepreneur*, backing Trump is profitable: these supporters are typically persons in the business or entertainment industry, and some are even close friends and past acquaintances. Regardless of affiliation, they see in Trump an opportunity to raise their professional profiles while padding their bank accounts (Williams, 2018).

Compare these entrepreneurial supporters to those in the upper right quadrant of Table 3.3. Among *Doctrinaires*, politics, rather than profits, matters is most important. These are the staunch conservatives and Republican Party loyalists who, because their unyielding beliefs prevent them from following anyone but a right-wing leader, are willing to overlook the fact that Donald Trump repeatedly violates cherished Republican and conservative principles. These violations take many forms: for example, with the current president flouting his lavish tastes and bourgeois upbringing (Rubino, 2016), behaving in less-than-moral if not irreligious ways (Hauerwas, 2017; Riess, 2018), cultivating tense relationships with war veterans and "top brass" military authorities (Gaouette, 2018; McKelvey, 2018; Vanden & Tritze, 2018; Walcott 2018), ignoring the recommendations of his White House advisers to practice more decorum on social media (Gaouette, 2018; Ott, 2017) and maintaining his questionable reputation with the law (Ball, 2017; Buchanan & Yourish, 2018).

TABLE 3.3 *A Typology of Black Trump Supporters*

		<i>Right-wing political orientation</i>	
		Low	High
<i>In-group racial identification</i>	Low	Entrepreneurial	Doctrinaire
	High	Iconoclastic	Complicated

By rejecting the conventional tenets of party and ideology, the *Iconoclasts* (see the bottom left-hand quadrant of Table 3.3) interpret Trump's political ascent as emblematic of the antiestablishment shift the world is currently undergoing. Authors like Black (2018), Inglehart and Norris (2016), Moffitt (2016), and Oliver and Rahn (2016) talk at length about the global trend toward populism, and this topic became the inspiration for the March 2017 issue of *Real World Economics Review*.<sup>12</sup> Because they rail against the establishment, iconoclastic African Americans have historically been lionized by the Republican Party as champions of conservative values (Asante & Hall, 2015; Faryna, Stetson, & Conti, 1997; Rigueur, 2015; Thomas, 1991). However, the reason why we argue that these supporters score higher on racial identity while getting lower marks on political orientation is because many iconoclasts, regardless of their race, see Trump as part of a larger movement and therefore seek to ride the president's momentum while pushing a populist—and at times, ethnocentric—agenda (Kalkan, 2016; Newman, et al. 2018).

We reserve the bottom right-hand quadrant of Table 3.3 for the *Complicated* Trump backers. These are the “true believers” that Harriot (2018) refers to in his essay, for these African Americans can reconcile their rightward-leaning politics with their strong sense of racial pride. Moreover, they encourage other Black people to escape the “Democratic plantation.” By acknowledging that the Left often takes communities of color for granted, the Complicated seek to undermine the Democratic Party's monopoly over Black politics. According to these supporters, subverting this political monopoly requires, among other things, casting ballots for GOP candidates and advocating for conservative policies and causes. This sentiment is voiced strongly by the #walkaway social media movement, and an African-American-specific version of this movement is known as #blexit—a combining of the racial designation “Black” and the word “exit,” which mimics the UK-based portmanteau adopted by those who defend the United Kingdom's withdrawal from the European Union (Clark, Goodwin, Goodwin, & Whiteley, 2017; Goodwin & Heath, 2016; Hobolt, 2016; Inglehart & Norris, 2016).

To summarize, we organize African American Trump supporters into four broad categories: the profit-driven *entrepreneurs*, the ideologically rigid *doctrinaires*, the opportunistic and racially mobilized *iconoclasts*, and the anti-Left provocateurs comprising the group known as the *complicated*. In

the section below, we discuss a sample of oral histories collected from the C-SPAN Video Library. Each oral history contains audio or video footage of outspoken African Americans whose viewpoints are consistent with each of the supporter types.

## EVIDENCE FROM THE C-SPAN VIDEO LIBRARY

Based on an approach used in past research (see Block & Haynes, 2015), we analyze oral histories footage using Dedoose, our preferred software for mixed-methods research. The typology mentioned above—of the entrepreneurial, doctrinaire, iconoclastic, and complicated Trump supporters—will serve as our “deductive” (i.e., predetermined) themes, and present video footage from African Americans to whom these themes apply. Preliminary searches in the C-SPAN Video Library helped us to identify several oral histories that are relevant to our research. We discuss some of the most exemplary excerpts here.

### Entrepreneurial Black Trump Supporters

Two of the more outspoken entrepreneurs are Lynnette Hardaway and Rochelle Richardson (a duo that goes by the nickname “Diamond and Silk”). In a C-SPAN clip from July 18, 2016, titled “Donald Trump Campaign and Female Voters,”<sup>13</sup> the duo spoke at length during the 2016 Republican National Convention in Cleveland, Ohio. After whipping the crowd into a frenzy with stock comments about Hillary Clinton’s shortcomings, Donald Trump’s bona fides, and the truth-challenged liberal media, Diamond and Silk go on to make the case for why they will support the presumptive GOP nominee:

And when we looked at Donald J. Trump, we see a man that never wavers, nor does he back down. That’s what we love. That’s right. I love everything about Donald J. Trump. I love everything. He can do no wrong in my eyes.

The excerpt above suggests that Diamond and Silk prefer Trump because they like his style—a sentiment voiced by several Black Trump

supporters who are taken with the candidate's charisma. This preference, when combined with the fact that the duo's website (<https://www.diamondandsilkinc.com/>) contains very little in the way of political content and instead includes opportunities for visitors to purchase merchandise, schedule speaking engagements, and make contributions, adds further credence to our suspicion that Diamond and Silk's allegiance to the Trump administration is grounded more in profits than in ideology and partisanship.

### **Doctrinaire Black Trump Supporters**

Carol Swain, a conservative television analyst and former political science and law professor at Vanderbilt University, provides us with an example of a doctrinaire supporter. Swain has reputation for holding and defending conservative viewpoints (see McClerking & Block, 2005), and her status as a scholar-activist affords her a unique platform to advocate for these ideological ideals. Her commitment to doing so was on full display in a July 12, 2016, clip titled "Conservatism and Progressivism," which was based on a panel discussion between Swain, conservative writer and television personality Ann Coulter, liberal critic Sally Kohn, and journalist/author/talk show host Janus Adams that took place as part of the Comedy Cellars' underground debate series.<sup>14</sup> When asked to discuss politics, Professor Swain reminded the audience that it was the Republican Party that abolished slavery and elected the first woman into Congress in 1915. Swain also explains why her Trump support went beyond the candidates "cult of personality" and instead reflected her long-standing religious and political convictions:

I don't think we should vote for any candidate because they are black or a woman or because they are going to make a historical first, we should be thinking of the best qualified candidate. And in the case of where our nation stands today, with so much chaos and the breakdown of rule of law that we have seen with the Obama Administration, and we have [with] Hillary Clinton, . . . with a history of lies, lies, more lies. . . . She should be indicted. . . . Why should we elect a president who shows no respect for the rule of

law and will apparently say anything to get the votes of various groups? I think that she and the Democrats manipulate Blacks, she uses Blacks, and when she gets power, they refuse to advance the cause of Blacks. When it comes to Donald Trump, I intend to support him because I like his stance against political correctness; I think he speaks to the issues that a lot of Americans care about, and, right now, there are very few people who are willing to stand up and push back against the destruction of America. America is being destroyed. It is heading in the wrong direction. And there are very few people on the horizon that that will stand up and speak truth. And I think Trump speaks truth and I am confident that he will appoint people that are qualified to lead. So, I am going to support Donald Trump, and I will never under any circumstances support a Democrat. I don't see how any Christian could. I'm a Christian, and I would never ever vote for that party.

For Swain, it is not about demographic identity. Rather, Professor Swain bases her political decisions purely on her adherence to rightward-leaning political doctrine: As can be seen in the first sentence in the excerpt above, Swain would not cast a ballot for a female or an African American presidential nominee simply because they represent “historical firsts,” and Swain is emphatic in her assertion that she could never bring herself to vote for a Democrat, regardless of that candidate's race or gender.

### **Iconoclastic Black Trump Supporters**

The iconoclasts are a particularly vocal group celebrities, aspiring celebrities, and sociopolitical contrarians and, if the activity on social media is any indication, these African American Trump supporters are growing in both number and influence. Of interest to us is Candace Owens, the iconoclast that has seen her celebrity status increase since she was endorsed by Kanye West, the mega-rapper, singer, songwriter, record producer, and fashion designer who started out as a Democrat before converting over to the political Right. While discussing the Kanye endorsement to the audience at the Steamboat Institute Freedom conference (August 11, 2018),<sup>15</sup> Owens tells the audience that, while she is thrilled that West “likes the way

she thinks” (see Golding, 2018; Rossman, 2018), she also refutes the idea that the Red Wave (the predicted mass shift of African Americans to the Republican Party that she later termed “Blexit”) is riding West’s coattails:

If there are celebrities who are willing to open the conversation, to get people to think differently, and to think critically . . . that is not hitching to a wagon; that wagon is going nowhere. Kanye didn’t say: “Hey, everyone has to vote for Trump.” [He rather says]: “I like Trump.” Okay, he’s allowed to like Trump. You don’t need permission to like Trump if you like him. [Kanye] also did not then say: “I hate Hillary,” right? He just said who he liked. The idea that we are hitching to his wagon is false. We are embracing the fact that there are people who have hitched their wagon to the celebrity culture, and we are trying to do away with that. We are trying to let people know that it is okay to be an individual. It is okay to think differently. Yes, I embrace that completely.

Readers should know that Kanye West has recently began to distance himself Owens, partly because he did not want to be (mis)represented as being the person who designed the logo for Owen’s “Blexit” clothing line and merchandise company, but also because he worried that, after the controversies stirred by his increasingly polarizing Twitter messages and the his recent visit to the White House, he believed it best to take a break from politics to focus on “being creative” (Montgomery, 2018). Owens has since apologized to West for the misunderstanding, and, as expected, she has continued her quest to encourage African Americans to shift their allegiance from the Democratic Party to the GOP (Giaritelli, 2018).

### **Complicated Black Trump Supporters**

The Complicated are arguably the most intriguing of the African American Trump backers. They are the ones for whom both political orientation and racial identity matter deeply and as such, have forged an uneasy alliance with the Trump campaign and eventual presidency. To discuss these Trump supporters, it is useful to return to Gregory Cheadle, the person behind the “my African Americans” incident described in the introduction.



Recall that Cheadle describes himself as a Lincoln Republican: a moniker meant to convey that he holds socially and politically conservative viewpoints while still caring about racial equality. Recall also that Cheadle took issue with Trump's governing agenda and that he voiced his misgivings publicly. While it is not a C-SPAN video, the biopic<sup>16</sup> about Cheadle that was published on YouTube by the *Los Angeles Times* on September 1, 2017, does a great job of articulating Cheadle's concerns. As mentioned in the biopic: "He believes prejudice has limited the number of [B]lacks in Trump's Cabinet. Cheadle claims Trump's promise to help the African American community was nothing more than empty rhetoric."

It is clear that, despite voting for Trump because of his conservative ideology, Cheadle is far from pleased with Donald's racial politics, and he prefers not to be mentioned in the same sentence of those African Americans who Trump in particular (and the GOP more generally) uses as, what Harriot describes as, "MAGA-scots (or token mascots for the "Make American Great Again campaign).

## CONCLUSION

A question we often get is "Who cares"? Since Blacks for Trump are still a small number of the African American electorate, then why bother studying them systematically? If the arguments in our introduction (that studying this group of Trump supporters exposes important race and gender gaps) do not fully persuade you, the perhaps exploring the implications of these voters will. For example, understanding political orientation and racial identity as potential motivators of Trump support is important because Blacks for Trump might represent the "miner's canary" in the sense that they show the fragility of the presumably strong bond between Black America and the Democratic Party. If the number of African American Trump supporters increases, then this should tell the Democrats that they cannot continue to rely on Black votes. The fact that Black support for GOP candidates is so stable (see Figure 3.3) means that both political parties should do a better job of recruiting this important voting bloc.

This chapter is part of a larger project in which we study the impact of racial identification and political orientation on Blacks' Trump support.

Future research will complement the findings from the C-SPAN oral histories with examinations of survey evidence. In particular, we plan to use evidence from the 2016 Collaborative Multi-Racial Post-Election Survey (Barreto, Frasure-Yokley, Vargas, & Wong, 2018) because of its focus on racial attitudes and its large oversample of Black respondents ( $n = 3,154$ ). By triangulating qualitative analyses of video footage with statistical analyses of polling data, we seek to paint a fuller picture of the who the African Americans who support Trump are, and, more importantly, why they decided to cast ballots the way they did.

## NOTES

1. Trump received heavy scrutiny for describing himself as “non-braggadocious” during the September 2016 debate against Hillary Clinton. Comedians and social media users chided Trump, not only for using an unconventional term, but also because he did so while he was, in fact, crowing about his accomplishments (McAffee, 2018).

2. In an effort to chronicle his words and deeds, Desjardins (2017), Leonhardt and Philbrick (2018), and Simon (2018) created lists that include, for example, Trump’s multiple housing discrimination lawsuits; his use of the N-word and other racially denigrating terms; the “birther” conspiracy regarding Barack Obama’s nationality; his refusal to condemn the White Supremacists who endorse him; his recommendation that the United States no longer accept immigrants from Haiti, El Salvador, and African nations (places he calls “shitholes”); and the recent decision to criminally prosecute all immigrants who enter the country illegally, a strategy that uses the separation of parents from their young children as a deterrent against illegal border crossings.

3. One need only to visit Cheadle’s website to learn that the candidate prioritizes issues of racial equality and social justice: <http://cheadleforcongress.com/Cheadle4Congress1856.html>.

4. While initially coined by Michael the Black Man, the right-wing fringe activist who is often seen on stage at Trump rallies wearing T-shirts or carrying signs with the “Blacks for Trump” message (Crockett 2017; Mettler & Bever, 2017), the phrase has since evolved to represent all pro-Trump (and anti-Clinton) voters who happen to be African American (for example, search *#Blacks4Trump* on Twitter, or visit <http://blackamericansfortrump.net/>).

5. Two things are worth noting here: First, Barack Obama is the son of a Kenyan father and White American mother but views himself as culturally “Black” rather than biracial. Second, his status as the first African American US president is a distinction that neither Bill Clinton (for whom the nickname “Black President” was meant as a backhanded compliment) nor Warren G. Harding (whose political legacy was dogged by rumors of his alleged African ancestry) can claim.

6. Mitt Romney (who got 7% of his support from African Americans) and John McCain (for whom 4% of Blacks voted), did worse among Black voters, arguably because they both ran against Barack H. Obama, the nation’s first self-identified African American to make it out of the primaries, let alone win serve in the White House. Obama’s historic candidacy and two-term presidency corresponds with two of the highest Black vote shares ever earned by a Democratic nominee (95% in 2008 and 93% in 2012). The uniqueness of the Obama candidacy is further highlighted by the fact that, from 1980 to 2004, GOP candidates tended to earn between 8% to 12% of the Black vote—the same vote share range that Trump won (Kiely, 2016).

7. This finding appears in many places, but we are familiar with it from the polls conducted by the African American Research Collaborative (<https://www.africanamericanresearch.us/>). We are referring specifically to the results from the 2018 Midterm Election Survey (fielded June 27 through July 2, 2018) and the American Election Eve Poll (October 31–November 6, 2018).

8. We acknowledge the racial history underlying these current patterns, for Blacks’ party loyalty results just as much from a suspicion of the GOP as it does from Blacks being “captured”—to use Frymer’s (2010) term—by a Democratic Party that sometimes takes them for granted.

9. The following image illustrates this dynamic, where entertainer Kanye West and then candidate Trump share a “bro-hug” in the lobby of Trump Tower while West’s colleague looks on and is visibly uncomfortable with the interaction: <https://media.giphy.com/media/rZznwvqzTu8bm/giphy.gif>.

10. See Harriot (2018) for an alternative typology.

11. We acknowledge that the concepts of racial identification and political orientation are inherently continuous rather than categorical, and, as such, the “low” versus “high” cut-points we use in Table 3.3 are arbitrary. However, we decided to present the concepts this way for ease of presentation, and we hope that the readers agree that the 2-by-2 table is useful for distinguishing different types of African American Trump supporters.

12. An online version of this journal issue is available here: <http://www.paecon.net/PAEReview/issue78/whole78.pdf#page=54>.

13. Here is a web link to the video footage from which we obtained the excerpt: <https://www.c-span.org/video/?412888-1/panel-support-donald-trump-women-voters>.

14. The URL for the video footage is <https://www.c-span.org/video/?412034-1/conservatism-progressivism>.

15. See <https://www.c-span.org/video/?448631-1/steamboat-institute-freedom-conference> for footage of this conference.

16. Readers can find the video here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GtqU8Eya8KQ>.

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## **PART 2**

# ***Using the C-SPAN Video Library to Study Congressional Rhetoric***

*Edited by Logan Strother*

The three studies in Part 2 highlight the exciting opportunities afforded to scholars of political communication by the C-SPAN Video Library. The studies show three particular ways to use data gathered from the Video Library: Hoewe and Ziny content-analyze the rhetoric of members of Congress to study the use of moral language in immigration rhetoric; Schmitt and Bergbower examine congressional support for three of President Donald Trump’s more controversial policy proposals—building a wall on the southern border of the United States, banning the entry of immigrants and refugees from majority-Muslim nations, and penalizing sanctuary cities; and Sery focuses on discussion of the federal judiciary in Congress to understand how the rhetoric of politicians simultaneously performs partisan identity and seeks to build their constituencies. A clear focus on legislator rhetoric ties these chapters together. They concern members of Congress’s choice or decision to speak, and *how* those members speak—what they say, what language they employ, and why.

Beyond this common thread, these chapters suggest a wide variety of potential applications for the data that can be gleaned from the C-SPAN Video Library. In doing so, the foregoing studies point to the wide variety of social science questions that data from the Video Library could help to address. These studies also suggest the wide range of methodologies that can be applied in studies using the C-SPAN data.

The chapter by Carly Schmitt and Matthew L. Bergbower, “Building the Border Wall: Congressional Efforts to Support Trump’s Immigration

Legacy,” presents an examination of the correlation between legislators’ rhetoric and their support for executive policy priorities in the area of immigration. Schmitt and Bergbower code rhetoric during the “Morning Hour” when legislators are afforded an opportunity to signal their policy priorities, so as to assess this rhetoric vis-à-vis support for three of President Trump’s legislative priorities: the Muslim travel ban, the border wall, and penalties for sanctuary cities. In this way, this chapter is fundamentally concerned with legislators’ decisions to speak—specifically, it asks when and why legislators take advantage of opportunities to signal their political and policy preferences to their constituents and also to other elites, including co-partisans who may have less-entrenched preferences on the relevant policy. Thus the chapter points to the potential utility of the C-SPAN Video Library to address key questions in the study of legislative behavior.

In “Congress and Immigration Policy: Use of Moral Language Surrounding the Trump Presidency,” Jennifer Hoewe and Mohammed Ziny also examine legislative rhetoric on the topic of immigration, but they go beyond the question of rhetorical support for or opposition to some specified policy. Instead, Hoewe and Ziny take advantage of the C-SPAN Video Library collection of closed captioning transcripts, and code the language used by members of Congress for the moral foundations implicit in their rhetoric. This analysis suggests a wide array of potential uses the C-SPAN Video Library could be put to: much current research in political science, psychology, sociology, communication, and related fields is working to understand the role of psychological traits in shaping elite political behavior—and much of this work uses elite rhetoric to measure latent psychological traits. As such, the C-SPAN Video Library has tremendous potential to contribute to our understanding of the effects of elite psychology on a huge array of politically and socially relevant outcomes.

Finally, in “Using the Judiciary: C-SPAN, Judicial Activism, and the Constitutive Function of Law in the Trump Era,” Joseph Sery qualitatively analyzes the rhetoric of members of Congress about the judiciary. This examination of “rights talk” by elites points to the use of the C-SPAN Video Library for understanding when, why, and how members of Congress might seek to persuade or lead their publics rather than engage vacuous signaling. In exploring this dynamic, the Sery chapter shows that the



C-SPAN Video Library is potentially valuable, not only for the study of legislators, but also of other institutions. That is, oversight of the executive and judicial branches is a key activity that Congress engages in—and when it does oversight, not only do legislators talk in depth about the activities, outputs, and actors in other units of government, but they often bring in people from these other institutions to provide testimony. In short, Sery's study is a good reminder that extensive information about executive agencies, the judiciary, independent commissions, and so on is on file in the C-SPAN Video Library, alongside the legislative rhetoric that C-SPAN is known for.

The chapters by Schmitt and Bergbower, Hoewe and Ziny, and Sery discussed above use the materials available in the C-SPAN Video Library in three distinct ways, and do so to answer three very distinct types of question. The uses to which the C-SPAN data were put in these studies point to both the substantive breadth of topics that can be broached using the C-SPAN Video Library and to the wide variety of methodological tools that could be brought to bear on these topics. Despite their diversity, one key theme of the three chapters discussed here is that what legislators say—this elite rhetoric—is tremendously important to students of American politics. And the importance of this rhetoric highlights the importance of the C-SPAN Video Library, as it offers unparalleled opportunity to rigorously study elite rhetoric in the U.S. Congress. Importantly, though, the C-SPAN Video Library utility is not limited to studies of Congress. Because Congress provides oversight over the executive and judicial branches, votes to confirm or reject elites who have been nominated to staff these other institutions, and votes on appropriations and structural bills that directly affect these other institutions, the C-SPAN Video Library can provide tremendous insight into all of our federal institutions.

Building on this, there are two further points made clear by these chapters. First, the C-SPAN Video Library can be used to study rhetoric that is aimed at the public, at other elites, or both. The chapters discussed here show that elites sometimes aim their rhetoric at the mass public in an effort to signal that they take positions on, or claim credit for, legislation preferred by their constituents. At other times, though, legislators' rhetoric is aimed squarely at other political elites—perhaps to signal preferences to members of other institutions, to draw attention toward (or

away from) intraparty disagreements, or to stake out positions on pending legislation within the chamber. And sometimes rhetoric is aimed at both mass and elite audiences at the same time. Second, these studies show that there is much more to be gleaned from legislative rhetoric than simple support for or opposition toward a bill, nominee, or policy position. The legislative rhetoric collected in the C-SPAN Video Library can be tapped to measure and explore the effects of legislator psychology in a huge number of contexts. By extension, the Video Library could also be put to great use in studying the role of emotion in legislative behavior. Just as language can be used to measure latent psychological traits, language used is an excellent way to study the emotions being felt when a person is speaking. As such, the Video Library could be fruitfully used to explore numerous questions about how emotions shape legislative behavior. The C-SPAN Video Library's nearly 250,000 hours of content offer a wealth of opportunities to contribute to key debates in political science, history, communication, and related fields. The data available in the Video Library can be used in a tremendous variety of ways, ranging from small-N and interpretative approaches to large-N quantitative approaches, and even to advanced machine-learning techniques, and everything in between. The three chapters discussed here highlight some of this breadth, and suggest an even wider array of opportunities to available to researches who would take advantage of the C-SPAN Video Library.

# CHAPTER 4

## CONGRESS AND IMMIGRATION POLICY: USE OF MORAL LANGUAGE SURROUNDING THE TRUMP PRESIDENCY

*Jennifer Hoewe and Mohammed Ziny*

Recent events have illustrated the tumultuous nature of Americans' consideration of individuals not born in the United States. The current political climate seems to have emboldened the opinions of those Americans who are less comfortable with the inclusion of individuals born outside the United States. One of the major events that appears to have triggered more intense rhetoric surrounding immigrants and immigration policy was the election of President Donald Trump. His campaign featured strong stances regarding immigrants and refugees, from building a wall between the United States and Mexico to the "Muslim ban" that restricted travel to the United States from seven Muslim-majority countries. It is possible that Trump's enflamed language regarding immigrants and immigration policy, in particular, has encouraged a similar increase in the use of morally laden language among members of Congress.

This language used by political figures is then translated, often through the media, to the general public, helping constituents form their opinions

of policy issues (e.g., Baum & Potter, 2008; Soroka, 2003). The language used to describe individuals can reflect the larger social context surrounding those discussions. Prior research has used varying strategies to study changes in language related to political issues more broadly (e.g., Clifford & Jerit, 2013) as well as immigrants more specifically (Hadarics & Kende, 2017; Hoewe, 2018). As such, it is important to study the language used to describe policy issues and the individuals affected by those policies to better understand the context of current public opinion.

This study extends the existing literature by determining how members of the U.S. Congress use language to contextualize their arguments and statements regarding immigration in the current political era. Given the implementation of several contentious policies since Trump's election (e.g., DACA renewal, the separation of immigrant families), it is possible that politically driven language has similarly shifted into sharper stances. This possibility will be examined through the context of moral foundations theory (Haidt, 2008). This study examines how members of the U.S. Congress discuss policy related to immigration, focusing on how senators and representatives discussed immigration both before Donald Trump took office and during the first portion of his presidency. It will determine if Trump's controversial stances related to immigration have emboldened members of Congress in their discussions of immigrants relocating to the United States.

The results of this study benefit the study of political communication in several ways. First, this study considers how changes in the overall political environment (in this case, Trump's presidency) can alter Congress's discussions of political issues. Second, it applies moral foundations theory to the understanding of politically motivated discussions of immigration. This will help in understanding how moral language is used to persuade the American public into agreeing with a particular side of a political debate. Third, this study shows how these uses of moral language are tied to emotion-based persuasion by considering the relationships between a member of Congress' political party, their use of moral language, and the degree of positive or negative language they used to describe immigrants or immigration. Each of these goals works toward providing a better understanding of Americans' attitudes toward immigrants and immigration-related policies.

## PUBLIC PERCEPTIONS OF IMMIGRANTS

Theories of social identity (Tajfel, 1981, 1982) and group threat (Blumer, 1958) have long predicted that people may find other individuals who they perceive as distinct from themselves as out-group members capable of disrupting the status quo. Such perceived threats to social or economic order tend to be increased when the number of out-group members rises (Schlueter & Scheepers, 2010). Furthermore, as social distance between the individual and the perceived out-group members increases, so does the likelihood of stereotyping (e.g., Magee & Smith, 2013; Trope & Liberman, 2010).

It can be argued and largely supported that many—if not all—new immigrant groups in the United States have become part of an out-group for at least some Americans. A recent Pew survey (2018a) found an overall shift in attitudes toward support of increasing legal immigration; however, the issue was sharply divided along political lines, where twice as many Republicans (33%) supported cutting legal immigration when compared to Democrats (16%). The same report showed that nearly 70% of Americans were sympathetic toward immigrants who entered the United States illegally. But again, there was a partisan distinction: far more Democrats indicated these feelings of sympathy (86%) than Republicans (48%). Pew also asked about support for expansion of the wall separating the United States from Mexico, an issue specific to one of the policies touted in Trump's campaign and early presidency. In this June 2018 survey, respondents were again starkly divided by partisanship. Republicans were largely in support of expanding the wall (74%), while the majority of Democrats were opposed to it (83%). These results begin to illustrate a discrepancy in the understanding of attitudes toward immigration and related policy in the United States.

Since these views are held so strongly by the electorate, it is likely that these partisan views are shared and voiced by members of the U.S. Congress. The question this study seeks to ask is whether those views were exacerbated—or emboldened—by Trump's election. This question will be addressed by analyzing the underlying moral foundations used in these elected officials' discussions about immigrants and immigration.

## MORAL FOUNDATIONS AND POLITICS

Moral foundations theory was developed to study the underlying structures that form individuals' morality. Haidt (2008) defined the moral systems that drive everyday life as "interlocking sets of values, practices, institutions, and evolved psychological mechanisms that work together to suppress or regulate selfishness and make social life possible" (p. 70). Based on extensive research demonstrating these moral foundations' application across numerous cultures and contexts, moral foundations theory advances five moral foundations: care/harm, fairness/cheating, loyalty/betrayal, authority/subversion, and sanctity/degradation (Graham et al., 2013).

These moral foundations have been categorized into individualizing and binding foundations (Hadarics & Kende, 2017; Weber & Federico, 2013). Individualizing foundations, including care/harm and fairness/cheating, are based in considerations of individual rights. Binding foundations, including loyalty/betrayal, authority/subversion, and sanctity/degradation, are based in the efforts made to support group cohesion. Research on these moral foundations has revealed that liberal individuals are more likely to focus on individualizing foundations. Conservatives, on the other hand, are more likely to form judgments based on binding foundations (Weber & Federico, 2013).

Prior research has illustrated that these moral foundations can be linked to partisan-based policy arguments. Focusing on attitudes toward immigrants and refugees, Hadarics and Kende (2017) found that people rely on particular moral foundations in order to form these attitudes. Use of binding foundations in describing immigrants and refugees was associated with perceptions of threat to group cohesion and social order, whereas use of individualizing foundations was related to perceptions of these individuals as needing help and support. Hoewe and Bowe (2016) also used moral foundations language to examine political discourse. They analyzed letters to the editor and found that partisan stances and policy preferences were strongly connected to the emphasis of particular moral foundations. Clifford and Jerit (2013) found that when discussing stem cell research, liberals were more likely to use words related to the moral foundation of care/harm. Conservatives relied on language associated

with the moral foundation of sanctity/degradation. Particularly of note for the present study, Clifford and Jerit (2013) concluded that elite individuals' usage of moral language helps citizens in connecting their own moral foundations with political attitudes.

These politically distinct interpretations of moral issues may—and most likely will—factor into discussions of current political issues. As such, this study will determine how moral language used by members of Congress may indicate their understanding and suggested treatment of immigrants. It is predicted that this language will become more morally driven following Trump's inauguration. As a divisive political figure, Trump does little to encourage cooperation or compromise among other politicians. For example, the brazen statements he made on Latin American immigrants when he announced his candidacy in 2016 were immediately met by extensive backlash from Hillary Clinton and Bernie Sanders, the leading candidates for the Democratic nomination, as well as powerful Senate Democrats such as Elizabeth Warren and Chuck Schumer and House Democrats like Nancy Pelosi. Effectively, Trump offered one extreme in the nation's immigration policy, and the protracted and unambiguous response from the most influential Democratic Party figures emphasized to voters the lack of a middle ground between the two positions.

Given that Democratic election strategies often rely heavily on minority voters, and with Hispanic and Latino individuals being the largest minority group in the United States, congressional Democrats may feel a greater need to highlight the moral foundations of care/harm and fairness/cheating. As a retort to Trump's seeming lack of regard for the unsafe and unstable conditions immigrants and refugees are often attempting to leave, Democrats would point to the harm these individuals would face if they did not migrate, pushing for an increased consideration of the care they may need extended to them. And in response to calls for a "Muslim ban" and initiatives on the Mexican border that would drastically reduce immigration, Democrats may argue that Americans are cheating immigrants out of a future, when the United States has traditionally been more open to the settling of immigrants (pursuit of fairness).

Republicans, on the other hand, would paint alleged "illegal immigrants" as guilty of betrayal because they enter the country unlawfully, expressing solidarity with the immigrants who are characterized as loyal

because they enter the country legally. Trump united Americans in recognizing the authority of their government and its immigration laws by underscoring the depiction of unauthorized immigrants as subversive. This ties into an argument on preserving the sanctity of law and order against degradation. While these are not new lines of rhetoric, the intensity of Trump's platform was unprecedented when many political analysts predicted the Republican Party would use the 2016 election to court new voters in minority groups. This intensity solidified the conservative bloc against such expectations, leading Democrats to seize the opportunity to secure their voter coalition and present themselves as a foil to Trump. On both sides, it made political sense to further contrasts between the immigration policies of the two parties. This divisiveness should lead to increasingly divergent moral language used to describe individuals attempting to enter the United States. Therefore, the following predictions are made.

Based on their political party, the language used by members of Congress to describe immigration policy will become more morally driven after Trump's inauguration, where:

- H1a:** Democrats will increase their emphasis on the moral foundations of care/harm and fairness/cheating (i.e., individualizing foundations).
- H1b:** Republicans will increase their emphasis on the moral foundations of loyalty/betrayal, authority/subversion, and sanctity/degradation (i.e., binding foundations).

To better understand how this use of language is related to general positivity or negativity toward immigrants and immigration policy, additional analyses will be performed. The valence of these comments, combined with their moral emphases, may better illuminate the contents of the arguments made by members of Congress. They may also begin to suggest the potential impact—intentional or unintentional—of this use of language in describing immigrants and immigration policy in the pre- and post-Trump eras. Therefore, the first research question focuses on relationships between the language used by U.S. senators and representatives in terms of its positive or negative valence.



**RQ1:** Are discussions of immigration policy among members of Congress connected to emotional language that leans positively or negatively?

## METHOD

To test these predictions, a sample of video evidence of members of Congress's use of language surrounding the issue of immigration was collected. Using the C-SPAN Video Library, discussion of policies related to immigration among senators and representatives was gathered. Using two different time periods, this study compares the use of moral language before and after Trump's inauguration. More specifically, it included a search for Senate and House floor debates that included the terms "immigrant(s)" and "immigration" for equal periods before and after January 20, 2017. The period of analysis before Trump's inauguration lasted from January 20, 2015, until June 30, 2016. The period of analysis after Trump's inauguration lasted from January 20, 2017, until June 30, 2018. These time periods were selected to be as equivalent as possible (e.g., time of year) and to avoid including the period between Trump's election and his inauguration. The time between election and inauguration is a transitional period, where the outgoing administration coordinates with the incoming one. Results from this period are not included because the transition is primarily occupied with the logistics of the transfer of office (staff and personnel vetting, resource allocation, etc.) and familiarizing of the incoming administration with the operations of the executive branch. The outgoing administration is known as the "lame-duck" administration because it often does not effectively pursue policy objectives due to time constraints. At the same time, the incoming administration is still occupied with putting together a cohesive, comprehensive program. With a lack of action or direction from the executive branch, the legislative branch operates without the type of influence that this study is trying to highlight—a difference between the Obama and Trump administrations.

This sample was drawn by searching for the aforementioned terms in the congressional records hosted in the C-SPAN Video Library, including

only those instances with the classifications “Senate Proceeding” and “House Proceeding.” This selection ensured that the information collected was related specifically to discussions held in relation to official House and Senate floor proceedings. To better understand the particular arguments made among these elected officials, transcripts of these videos were collected. The portions of the transcripts used for analysis were limited to those that related specifically to immigrants or immigration policy. For example, if a House floor debate concerned issues of cybersecurity first followed by a discussion of immigration policy, only those statements about immigration would be included in this analysis. In this way, the data in this study relates specifically to statements and arguments made by members of Congress who were engaged in discussions of immigration-related issues.

The unit of analysis was an individual statement made by a member of Congress about immigration. As such, each floor debate resulted in multiple data points. This coding process resulted in a total of 457 units of open-ended data,<sup>1</sup> which were the exact statements drawn from the C-SPAN Video Library closed captioning transcripts. Among these, there were 130 statements from the first time period and 327 statements from the second time period. Clearly, there was a marked increase in the amount of discussion about immigration after Trump was inaugurated. The average number of words per statement was 689. However, the primary interest of this study is the particular language used in these discussions.

The language was then coded for several features. First, the party of the speaker was considered. Since moral foundations theory predicts different uses of moral language as it relates to political affiliation (e.g., Graham, Haidt, & Nosek, 2009; Weber & Federico, 2013), this study analyzed how each moral foundation was used before and after Trump’s inauguration based on the party affiliation of the member of Congress. The analysis for this study included 216 statements from Republicans, 239 from Democrats, and 2 from Independents. Table 4.1 shows the breakdown of these statements by party and time period.

Second, this study used the Moral Foundations Dictionary to analyze the language that was used in discussions of immigration in Congress (Graham et al., 2009). Powered by a computer-assisted content analysis

TABLE 4.1 *Descriptive Statistics for Number of Statements*

	<i>Overall</i>		<i>Republicans</i>		<i>Democrats</i>	
	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%
<i>Time 1</i>	130	28.4	68	31.5	62	25.9
<i>Time 2</i>	327	71.6	148	68.5	177	74.1

*Note:* Percentages are of each column considered across time periods.

software, Linguistic Inquiry and Word Count (LIWC; Pennebaker, Booth, Boyd, & Francis, 2015), this dictionary permitted an analysis of the use of language related to each moral foundation. Each of the variables examined through LIWC is reported as a percentage of overall unit of analysis. That is, the value given each statement is the percentage of words related to care/harm, for example, in comparison to the entirety of that message. The Moral Foundations Dictionary has been used in prior research to examine similar usage of moral foundations language but in different contexts (e.g., Bowe & Hoewe, 2016; Graham et al., 2009). This dictionary includes two dimensions for each moral foundation: “foundation supporting” (e.g., care) and “foundation violating” (e.g., harm). The analysis then produces 10 moral foundation components. The foundation-supporting and foundation-violating components were summed to form each of the five moral foundations. (see Table 4.2 for descriptive statistics).

TABLE 4.2 *Descriptive Statistics for Use of Moral Language and Valence of Statements*

	<i>Overall</i>		<i>Republicans</i>		<i>Democrats</i>	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
<i>Care/Harm</i>	0.69	0.72	0.61	0.65	0.77	0.77
<i>Fairness/Cheating</i>	0.09	0.21	0.10	0.25	0.08	0.17
<i>Loyalty/Betrayal</i>	1.88	1.23	1.61	1.02	2.13	1.35
<i>Authority/Subversion</i>	1.25	1.04	1.54	1.17	1.00	0.84
<i>Sanctity/Degradation</i>	0.07	0.17	0.06	0.15	0.08	0.19
<i>Positive language</i>	2.89	1.35	3.09	1.44	2.71	1.26
<i>Negative language</i>	1.77	1.19	1.58	1.14	1.94	1.21

Third, several other constructs have been developed for analysis in LIWC (e.g., Cohn, Mehl, & Pennebaker, 2004; Newman, Pennebaker, Berry, & Richards, 2003). Among these, two categories may provide some additional context to the analyses suggested here. Both positive and negative emotion-based language may be related to the descriptions of immigration and related policy in the periods before and after Trump's inauguration. This possibility is considered by examining the use of these categories, which are part of the LIWC dictionary and have been validated in prior research (Kahn, Tobin, Massey, & Anderson, 2007). Overall, the language used in these congressional debates was more positive ( $M = 2.89$ ,  $SD = 1.35$ ) than negative ( $M = 1.77$ ,  $SD = 1.19$ ). Table 4.2 also shows the descriptive statistics for the use of moral language and positive or negative valence based on the party of the member of Congress. The descriptive statistics for use of moral language and valence of that language based on both time period and party of the speaker are presented in Table 4.3.

## RESULTS

To begin addressing this study's hypotheses, a hierarchical ordinary least squares (OLS) regression model was run. The first block of the model included the time period (first time period = 0, second time period = 1) and party of the speaker (0 = Democrat, 1 = Republican). The second block included the interaction term created by multiplying these two independent variables. This basic model structure was used in all of the analyses conducted; only the dependent variable was changed. Table 4.4 shows the results of each of the regression models testing the use of moral language based on each of Haidt and Graham's moral foundations.

The first dependent variable, use of moral language related to care/harm, did not result in a significant interaction between the time period and the party of the speaker. This illustrates that the use of this type of language did not change over time based on party. The only significant result in the model was the main effect of party, where Democrats were more likely to use language related to the care/harm moral foundation.

The second model tested the use of moral language related to fairness/cheating. This variable was not normally distributed, so it was transformed

TABLE 4.3 Descriptive Statistics for Use of Moral Language and Valence of Statements Based on Time Period

	Overall						Republicans						Democrats					
	Time 1			Time 2			Time 1			Time 2			Time 1			Time 2		
	M	SD		M	SD		M	SD		M	SD		M	SD		M	SD	
Care/Harm	0.60	0.70		0.73	0.72		0.52	0.59		0.65	0.68		0.68	0.80		0.80	0.75	
Fairness/Cheating	0.07	0.22		0.10	0.20		0.07	0.28		0.12	0.23		0.07	0.13		0.08	0.18	
Loyalty/Betrayal	1.95	1.18		1.85	1.25		1.55	0.95		1.63	1.05		2.39	1.26		2.03	1.38	
Authority/Subversion	1.59	1.10		1.12	0.99		1.86	1.11		1.39	1.17		1.28	1.02		0.90	0.75	
Sanctity/Degradation	0.08	0.18		0.07	0.17		0.10	0.21		0.04	0.12		0.06	0.13		0.08	0.20	
Positive language	2.63	1.15		3.00	1.42		2.58	1.06		3.32	1.53		2.67	1.26		2.73	1.26	
Negative language	1.86	1.21		1.73	1.18		1.73	1.18		1.52	1.13		2.01	1.23		1.92	1.20	

TABLE 4.4. Hierarchical Regression Models for Moral Foundations

	Care/Harm			Fairness/Cheating			Loyalty/Betrayal			Authority/Subversion			Sanctity/Degradation		
	$\beta$	<i>t</i>	$R^2$ change	$\beta$	<i>t</i>	$R^2$ change	$\beta$	<i>t</i>	$R^2$ change	$\beta$	<i>t</i>	$R^2$ change	$\beta$	<i>t</i>	$R^2$ change
Step 1			.02*			.02*			.05***			.10***			.01
Time period	.08	1.72		.11	2.43*		-.05	-1.08		-.19	-4.15***		-.04	-0.92	
Party of speaker	-.11	-2.28*		.06	1.34		-.21	-4.66***		.25	5.50***		-.07	-1.45	
Step 2			.00			.01			.01			.00			.01
Time $\times$ Party	.01	0.11		.17	1.79		.17	1.76		-.04	-0.46		-.17	-1.74	

\* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$ ; \*\*\* $p < .001$ .

by taking the square root before analysis. Again, the interaction term was not significant. The main effect of time period reached statistical significance, where members of both parties were using more moral language related to fairness/cheating after Trump's inauguration. This model, in combination with the first model, does not provide support for H1a, which proposed that Democrats would increase their emphasis on the moral foundations of care/harm and fairness/cheating.

The third model examined the moral foundation of loyalty/betrayal as the dependent variable. No significant interaction emerged. The main effect of the speaker's party was significant, but not in the direction that would be anticipated based on moral foundations theory. Instead, Democrats were more likely to use language related to loyalty/betrayal across both time periods.

The fourth model, looking at use of moral language related to authority/subversion, did not produce a significant interaction. However, both main effects were significant. During the second time period, senators and representatives were less likely to discuss legislation in terms of authority and subversion. As would be expected based on theory, Republicans, when compared to Democrats, were more likely to rely on this moral foundation in making their arguments.

The fifth moral foundations model with sanctity/degradation as the dependent variable showed that the interaction was not statistically significant. (This dependent variable also was not normally distributed, so it was transformed before analysis.) None of the relationships in this model reached statistical significance. The results of the previous three models do not provide support for H1b, which proposed that Republicans would increase their emphasis on the moral foundations of loyalty/betrayal, authority/subversion, and sanctity/degradation.<sup>2</sup>

The research question inquired about changes in language based on positivity or negativity in Congress's discussion of immigration pre- and post-Trump's inauguration. These two regression models tested the use of positive and negative emotional language as the dependent variables. The use of negative language (as shown in Table 4.5) was not related to the interaction term, but the main effect of the speaker's party was significant. Democrats were more likely to use negative language than were Republicans.

TABLE 4.5 Hierarchical Regression Models for Emotional Language

	Positive emotional language			Negative emotional language		
	$\beta$	<i>t</i>	$R^2$ change	$\beta$	<i>t</i>	$R^2$ change
<b>Step 1</b>			.04***			.03**
Time period	.13	2.89**		-.06	-1.21	
Party of speaker	.15	3.16**		-.16	-3.34**	
<b>Step 2</b>			.01*			.00
Time $\times$ Party	.24	2.48*		-.05	-0.52	

\* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$ ; \*\*\* $p < .001$ .

The positive language model, however, did produce a significant interaction effect. Using Andrew Hayes's PROCESS macro to probe this interaction, Republican members of Congress used more positive emotional language during Time 2 than did Democrats,  $\beta = .74$ ,  $p < .001$ . On the other hand, Democratic members of Congress did not change their use of positive emotional language over time,  $\beta = .06$ ,  $p = .78$ . Figure 4.1 illustrates this interaction effect. This result most likely indicates a shift toward positive perceptions of Trump's immigration policies among Republican members of Congress.

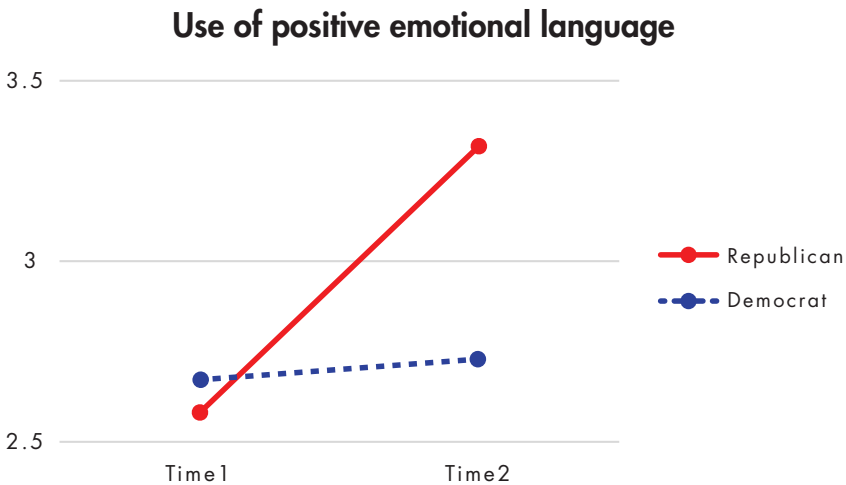


FIGURE 4.1 Use of positive emotional language in Democrats' and Republicans' discussions of immigration before and after Trump's inauguration.



## DISCUSSION

Given the recent heightened interest in policy related to immigration, this study sought to understand how members of Congress discuss these issues. Highlighting the importance of such research, a recent Pew Research Center (2018b) survey found that immigration had passed healthcare as the most important issue for voters in the months leading up to the 2018 U.S. midterm elections. Moreover, following Trump's inauguration, several controversial policies received a great deal of media coverage (e.g., DACA renewal, the separation of immigrant families, the so-called Muslim ban). In light of these public views and Trump-era policy initiatives, this research addressed if and how Trump's election spurred members of Congress to rely more heavily on morally laden language to persuade voters and other members of Congress about how the United States should proceed in regard to immigration policies.

This study's predictions relied on an over-time effect, where members of Congress were expected to more strongly utilize moral language related to immigration policy after Trump was inaugurated. An analysis of 36 months of House and Senate proceedings revealed that there were no significant over-time changes in moral language regarding immigration. The results presented in Table 4.3 show that there was very little overall change in the use of moral language before and after Trump was inaugurated. These mean values suggest that there were no major shifts in the use of morally bound language, contradicting this study's hypotheses. This finding is most easily explained by the overall reliance of the two parties on specific moral foundations. While Trump made waves with statements on immigrants and immigration that were not perceived as politically correct by members of both parties, immigration as an issue is not new to American politics. It has shaped the party preferences of voters, particularly in the last 10 years, where Democrats have taken stronger steps in support of both immigrants and refugees.

As moral foundations theory would predict (Graham et al., 2013; Haidt, 2008), Republicans were more likely than Democrats to use language related to the moral foundation of authority and subversion. Illustrating a reliance on a binding foundation (Weber & Federico, 2013), congressional Republicans' use of language related to authority/subversion in

their discussions of immigration is related to a general support of group cohesion. That is, they emphasize the legitimacy of the American government in making decisions about immigrants' rights in order to maintain a position of authority and rule in the country. This also emphasizes to Republican voters the weight they should place on protecting established citizens as a group from perceived encroachment on the wealth and social services of their nation by "aliens" actively engaged in subversion. To better show the reliance on this authoritative language, several portions of Congress members' statements that had high levels of the authority/subversion moral foundation are provided:

On June 29, 2017, Republican Representative Bob Goodlatte (VA) discussed the importance of law enforcement in maintaining order and offering protection, particularly from people who he referred to as "alien." He said: "Respect for the rule of law is to keep communities safe and make sure that people like Kate Steinle are not murdered in the city of San Francisco as we heard of murders by people who are unlawfully in the United States."

Republican Representative Robert Pittenger (NC) spoke on that same day, emphasizing similar sentiments: "Mr. Speaker, the previous administration's failure was the lack of prosecution and enforcement for crimes committed by illegal immigrants."

During the first time period (on July 23, 2015) Republican Representative Lamar Smith (TX) spoke about the need for Congress to ensure that immigration laws are followed: "When does it end? I don't understand how anyone could oppose enforcing immigration laws. The victims are not Democrats or Republicans. The victims are innocent Americans. Many of the crimes committed by illegal immigrants could have been prevented if the Obama administration had enforced immigration laws. Instead, it has chosen to ignore them, and innocent Americans continue to pay a steep price."

From the Senate floor on February 25, 2015, Republican Roy Blunt (AR) also spoke out in opposition to the Obama ad-

ministration: “Who will stand with the president’s clear power grab on immigration, and who will stand by the rule of law?”

On the other hand, Democrats were more likely than Republicans to use the moral foundation of care/harm. Again, this coincides with prior research (Weber & Federico, 2013). It also further solidifies Democrats’ reliance on individualizing foundations that focus on maintaining and supporting individual rights. In this case, Democratic members of Congress were more likely to emphasize the amount of consideration that should be given to the plight of immigrants. Focusing on the circumstances of individuals and the difficulty immigrants find in every step of their move to the United States, congressional Democrats are able to inspire sympathy from their traditional voter base, as well as score points with the affected minority communities that constitute a major part of their voter coalition. To illustrate these points, several statements made by members of Congress that were high in the moral foundation of care/harm are provided:

During the second time period (on June 21, 2018), Democratic Representative Kathleen Rice (NY) discussed immigration-related legislation: “The bills being considered today are not what most Americans want. They deny DREAMers a path to citizenship. They deny our ability to protect those fleeing poverty and violence. And they do nothing to reunite families already torn apart by the Trump administration.”

On that same day, Democratic Representative Eliot Engel (NY) also spoke against the same legislation: “This legislation does not provide a path to citizenship. It eliminates asylum protections, drastically cuts legal immigration, removes basic requirements for safe and humane detention, fails to end family separation, and does nothing to reunite the children who are being held 2,000 miles away from their parents, including in my district in New York, without any idea where their parents are or if they’ll ever see them again. This is cruel. What we need is a compassionate solution with a path to citizenship and reunification of these families. Instead, this

bill is an attack on family values and an insult to our country's beacon of freedom and opportunity to all."

Democratic Senator Edward Markey (MA) spoke about immigrants during the first time period (on February 25, 2015): "Immigrants are a vital part of the fabric of Massachusetts and of our country. They start businesses, they create jobs, and they contribute to our communities. The president's executive order recognizes the value of immigrants to our country. . . . The immigration system we have now doesn't reflect our time-honored values as a melting pot of diverse and cultural innovation. It hurts our economy, and it hurts our national security. In short, our immigration system is broken. But for millions of immigrants who are living in the shadows, who are working every day to support their families, who have been brought up here from a young age, who are serving our country in the military, are pursuing the dream of higher education, these people deserve a path that allows them to earn citizenship."

Contrary to prior research on moral foundations, this study's analyses showed that Democrats relied more heavily on the moral foundation of loyalty/betrayal than did Republicans. Previous studies have found that Republicans tend to emphasize loyalty/betrayal as one of the binding foundations (e.g., Weber & Federico, 2013). However, in this study of members of Congress's use of language related to immigration policy, Democrats were more likely to discuss these issues in terms of loyalty and betrayal. To better explain this finding, examples taken from this study's sample are provided. Each example includes a Democratic speaker whose statement relied strongly on the moral foundation of loyalty/betrayal:

Democratic Senator Catherine Cortez Masto (NV) spoke on February 14, 2018, about the importance of family and its relationship with immigration policy (see Figure 4.2): "Our immigration system is important for the family unit. Families are support systems. They pull each other up when someone is in need and pull together their resources. Strong families

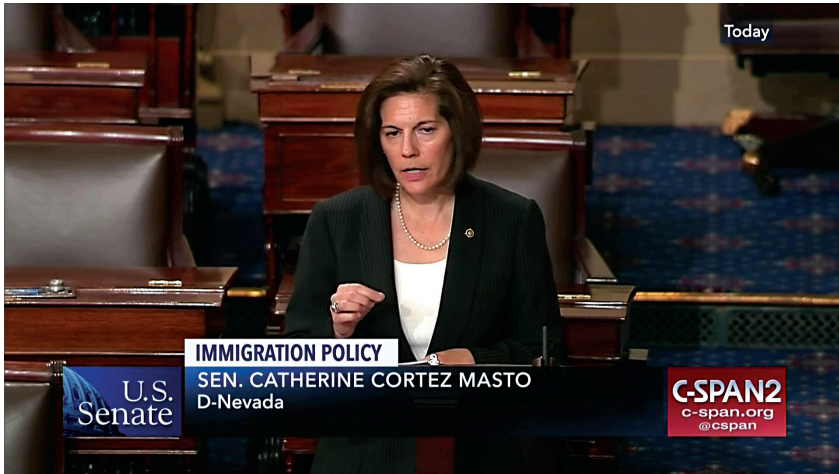


FIGURE 4.2 Sen. Cortez-Masto speaking about immigration reform.

build strong communities. . . . So, Mr. President, our immigration system should reflect our national commitment to the strength and the importance of that family unit and those family values. It makes no sense to me that we are fighting today to protect these kids and keep them in this country and then take their parents and rip them out of their homes and send them back to a country that they do not want to go to, that they do not call home, and where their safety is called into question. I do not understand that as a family value or as an American value.”

On June 21, 2018, Democratic Representative Judy Chu (CA) spoke about prior changes in immigration policy and a sense of betrayal from current legislation: “Finally in 1965, during the Civil Rights era, Senator Ted Kennedy (MA) ushered in a fairer immigration system based on family reunification. Because this system brings families together, immigrant households are less likely to rely on public benefits, and immigrants are often buying homes and starting businesses at a faster rate. Now with this bill, Republicans are trying to undo that process and make American White again. Worse, they are tearing families apart to do this while Trump and

Republicans are ripping parents from children at the border. They're trying to do the same through our immigration laws. This war on families must stop."

During that same House session, Democratic Representative Jerry Nadler (NY) discussed a loyalty both to families and to immigrants themselves: "Mr. Speaker, this bill is a harsh anti-immigrant package that fails to provide a pathway to citizenship for DREAMers while slashing legal immigration, crippling our agriculture industry, criminalizing undocumented immigrants, undermining public safety, and removing critical protection for families and children. All in one monstrous bill. There is no justification for anyone voting for this bill."

In an earlier House session during the second time period (June 27, 2017), Democratic Representative John Conyers (MI) said: "H.R. 3003 will trample the rights of states and localities to determine what is in the best interest of their public safety and will conscript law enforcement to enforce federal immigration law. The ultimate experts on community safety are communities themselves, and hundreds of them have determined that as community trust increases, crime decreases. This is because immigrants will come out of the shadows and report crimes to the local law enforcement when they are not threatened with deportation."

During the first time period, a similar sentiment emerged. For example, Democratic Representative David Cicilline (RI) spoke on March 17, 2016: "These executive actions will strengthen our communities, keep families together, and grow our economy. . . . [Conversely, the current resolution] is about a fundamental change in immigration policy that will rip families apart, that will undermine our values as a country."

As can be noticed from these selections from the transcripts, the loyalty emphasis appears to be on a commitment to families and to trust between individuals and institutions (e.g., immigrants and law enforcement). While Republicans' discussions of loyalty tend to rotate around an allegiance to

the American status quo and established political paradigms, Democrats seem to highlight loyalty among the individuals of immigrating families as well as a betrayal of American values (e.g., inclusion). This is a different perspective of the loyalty/betrayal moral foundation that appears under-represented in prior research. It is possible that congressional Democrats are willing to emphasize this moral foundation, but in ways distinct from their Republican counterparts.

This study also considered the use of positively and negatively valenced emotional language in members of Congress' discussions of immigration. Democrats, across both time periods, were more likely to use negative language. In terms of positive language, an interaction effect emerged, where Republican members of Congress used more positive emotional language during Time 2 than did Democrats. This finding appears to highlight Republicans' general acceptance of the policy positions espoused by Trump (during the second time period). That is, after Trump took office, House and Senate Republicans became more positive about immigration policy. These two examples provide a small representation of Republican members of Congress's recent sentiments on immigration that were high in use of positive language:

On February 7, 2018, Republican Representative John Curtis (UT) spoke about legislation in the House that addressed immigration: "I believe before us now is a unique window of opportunity that will allow us to solve some of these complex problems. We can make this an historic time for our country. . . . My hope is that Congress will pass a bill that provides certainty for DREAMers while also bringing meaningful improvements to our VISA programs for seasonal workers and our highly skilled immigrants, along with providing resources for an enhanced border security."

A longer statement given by Republican Senator Joni Ernst (IA) a week later (on February 15, 2018) shows similar sentiments: "Mr. President, I want to take a moment to emphasize why the Secure and Succeed Act is the right bill for the Senate to pass this week. You see, I chose to join my colleagues who have worked hard on this bill for months for a few important

reasons. First, this bill provides a way forward for our DACA recipients. I have said time and again that I appreciate the contributions our DACA recipients are making in our communities. They are our friends, our neighbors, and our churchgoers. I support finding them a way forward. Our bill does this. It does it in a fair and humane way. But importantly, it also adds strong eligibility requirements to ensure the safety and security of the program and stop future illegal immigration. For instance, it does not reward the parents that came here illegally by giving them any type of lawful status. And it sets reasonable time limits and restrictions on who can apply. Second, it provides immediate and significant investments in our border. We cannot allow this problem to happen again. We have a duty and an obligation to keep our borders secure and our citizens safe. Our bill recognizes that spending money on the border without giving law enforcement strong authorities is like buying a boat without an engine. We need both to keep our borders and our communities secure. Third, our bill recognizes that you cannot view immigration in a silo. It is a bulky issue that represents many legal, economic, and security concerns. Many of these issues are deeply interesting—deeply interconnected. Addressing DACA and addressing the border without addressing some of the other issues plaguing our system is a half solution. We must have the president's four principles to make this work. Finally, this is the president's plan. The White House has endorsed this proposal. The president's pen is ready to sign it."

Congressional Republicans' use of more positive language in the second time period appears to serve two purposes. First, it indicates a mainstream conservative endorsement of Trump's policy objectives, with many Republican politicians "falling in line" with the administration's push for a renewed hardline position (in the sense that it did not shift in an attempt to attract minority voters) regarding immigration and border security. Second, it allows Republican politicians to respond to the often



highly publicized verbal attacks by Democratic members of Congress on conservative immigration policies and the conservative figures introducing them, showing their support for such policies. Democrats' use of more negative language can be seen as a reaction to immigration policies they construe as draconian. Furthermore, Democrats contrast their sentiments and positions from Republicans by using negative language to describe legislation introduced and executive orders. These findings can be attributed to a general Democratic strategy of highlighting the drawbacks of strict immigration and border policies, as opposed to the Republican strategy that focuses on what would be lost if less stringent policy were implemented.

## CONCLUSIONS

The statements from members of Congress provided in this section offer a more in-depth perspective of their use of moral, positive, and negative language in discussions about immigration policy. They further illustrate that although moral language use has not changed significantly based on party distinctions in the times before and after Trump's inauguration, some moral lines were entrenched across time periods. As moral foundations theory would predict, Democrats focused on care/harm and Republicans emphasized authority/subversion. Surprisingly, Democrats also utilized the moral foundation of loyalty/betrayal. They stressed a commitment to family structures within immigrant communities and the United States more generally. Finally, Republicans were more likely to use positive language in the second time period, most likely showing their support for the Trump administration's policies related to immigration.

## NOTES

1. A portion of one unit of analysis was removed because of its anomalous nature in comparison to the rest of the sample. Democrat Nancy Pelosi filibustered for eight hours during one House session (on February 7, 2018). Much of

her discussion was related to immigration. To avoid this filibuster skewing the results of the analysis, only the first portion of her speech was included (i.e., the first 3,649 words).

2. Even when statements from representatives and senators were tested separately, no significant interaction effects emerged.

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## CHAPTER 5

# BUILDING THE BORDER WALL: CONGRESSIONAL EFFORTS TO SUPPORT TRUMP'S IMMIGRATION LEGACY

*Carly Schmitt and Matthew L. Bergbower*

Immigration has been a divisive issue within the Republican Party over the past decade. As the country elected an African-American president in 2008 with an agenda that included more inclusive immigration policies, growing discontent among Republicans across the country began to stir. The emergence of the Tea Party Movement in 2010, whose grassroots efforts advanced both conservative economic and cultural positions (Skocpol & Williamson, 2011), enhanced divisions within the Republican Party. Following the 2010 election, the Tea Party Movement continued to pick up steam with dozens of self-proclaimed Tea Party Republicans serving in Congress.<sup>1</sup> With a philosophy of limiting government and tightly regulating immigration, this group was able to obstruct compromises on immigration that were struck between mainstream Republican leaders in Congress and President Barack Obama.<sup>2</sup> This reflected a growing call by Tea Party grassroots activists across the country, 63% of whom viewed

immigrants as a growing threat to America's customs and values (Jones, Cox, Navarro-Rivera, Dionne, & Galston, 2014).

Then candidate Donald Trump's arrival onto the political scene in 2015 was perfect timing. In his June 2015 presidential announcement, Trump decried that under the leadership of Obama the United States had fallen to the level of "a third world county" (Trump, 2015). He focused much of his attention on Mexico and immigration, adding: "When Mexico sends its people, they're not sending their best. . . . They're bringing drugs, They're bringing crime, They're rapists. And some, I assume, are good people." This struck the right chord among those in the Republican Party whom were already concerned about immigration and weary about immigrants. Throughout the campaign, candidate Trump strongly advocated for a border wall along the United States-Mexico border, increased arrests from Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents, and a massive deportation plan akin to "Operation Wetback" implemented by President Dwight Eisenhower in the 1950s.<sup>3</sup>

Following his election, Trump has kept his campaign promises and prioritized immigration reform in his agenda. With support among the base, Trump continues to push Congress for, among many things, a border wall and enhanced deportations. If they did not recognize it before the election, then after Trump's Electoral College victory Republican members of Congress (MCs) saw how important these anti-immigration tenets were, not only to the president, but also to their party base. How is a Republican-led Congress to respond to this more extreme approach of immigration policy reform, especially given that both congressional leaders and much of the rank and file were not advocating for such hardline approaches to immigration reform prior to Trump's arrival into the White House?

Our research seeks to better understand congressional support for Trump's immigration agenda, such as building a border wall, implementing a travel ban for those from select Middle Eastern majority-Muslim countries,<sup>4</sup> and penalizing sanctuary cities. Given Trump's relative popularity among the Republican Party faithful—consistently holding over 80% approval ratings—Republican MCs may too advocate for strict immigration policies in the 115th Congress following the 2016 election. However, the White House did not achieve comprehensive immigration reform in the

115th Congress. Thus, we should not assume that Republicans are unified in their approach to immigration reform.

We conduct a content analysis of floor statements in the U.S. House on immigration in the 115th Congress (2017–2018). Our empirical results suggest that vocal advocates for Trump's immigration agenda come from a select few Republicans with culturally conservative views on immigration, while Democrats seek to capitalize on Trump's controversial proposals with an abundant amount of floor activity to voice their opposition. Our research contributes to both the presidential and legislative studies literatures. Contemporary research on presidential legislative success suggests that in today's heightened state of partisan polarization, presidents can be very successful in getting their agendas through Congress in periods of unified government (see, for example, Franklin & Fix, 2016). Our research is situated in this discussion by empirically assessing the extent to which the president's agenda is stunted or supported during the "honeymoon" period of the president's term under the condition of unified government.

In addition, our findings point to meaningful implications about representation in Congress and how MCs might position themselves in the 2018 midterm election. For example, with immigration as a central issue in the 2018 midterm elections, our research delves into the ways in which Republican MCs might be engaging in position taking (Mayhew, 1974) ahead of the election, especially those that were "primaried" (challenged, but not defeated) in the previous election cycle. We also explore whether MCs are responsive to those in their districts who might feel threatened in the wake of an increased presence of Latinos in their communities.

## THE CONTEXT OF THE 115TH CONGRESS AND SUPPORT FOR THE PRESIDENT'S AGENDA

In January 2012, Republican National Committee (RNC) chair Reince Priebus announced a plan to court Latino voters ahead of the 2012 general election. With the economy as a central concern for Latinos at the time (Madison, 2012), Priebus said that the Republican Party was eager to engage this group in the wake of high Latino unemployment rates. At the same time, immigration was also an unparalleled concern for many

members of the Republican Party base, particularly those aligned with the Tea Party. Although mainline conservatives were concerned with immigration from a law-and-order standpoint, there were also those whose immigration concerns rested on fears of the changing “face” of the country (Skocpol & Williamson, 2011; Parker & Barreto, 2013). This anti-other perspective undoubtedly tied to then candidate Trump’s “Make American Great Again” campaign theme. Trump was able to resonate with many voters who thought that certain minority groups in America were getting ahead at the expense of others with the help of socialist-based government programs (Sides, Tesler, & Vavreck, 2018). Further, these voters were particularity drawn to the racially charged messages prioritized by Trump, like the strict immigration stances.

Thus, entering into his first term with a Republican-controlled Congress, the president was presented with a seemingly perfect opportunity to push through his agenda, including its centerpiece: immigration. A Republican-controlled Congress provides the best institutional context for the president to pursue his immigration agenda, as research suggests that even during periods of high polarization, presidents can achieve legislative success with a unified government (Franklin & Fix, 2016). Further, presidents tend to be more successful immediately following their arrival into office (Beckmann & Godfrey, 2007; Eshbaugh-Soha, 2005; Lockerbie, Borrelli, & Hedger, 1998; Piffner, 1988; but see also Light, 1999 and Barrett & Eshbaugh-Soha, 2007). Together, this provides the opportunity for the president to achieve legislative success on agenda items, including immigration.

However, the political context has not necessarily lent itself to congressional support for the president’s more extreme views on immigration. Although the party base has largely fallen in line with the president’s hardline view on immigrants and immigration, the general public has not. Specifically, polling in 2018 finds that 65% of Americans do not agree that immigrants are more likely to commit violent crimes and 69% feel sympathy towards undocumented immigrants living in the United States (Pew Research Center, 2018). Further, 60% of Americans oppose the president’s border wall proposal, while the country is evenly split on what to do about sanctuary cities (CBS News, 2018). Given that the public mood was generally unsupportive of the president’s hardline approach to immigration, congressional support and action on these agenda items may be stunted.



Adding to this, embracing stricter immigration policies undoubtedly has consequences for the Republican Party in its quest for power in Congress. Demographically, Latinos are the largest racial minority group in the nation and continue to grow as part of the electoral body. Stricter approaches to immigration reform affect the treatment and experiences of Latinos in the United States. Latinos may be more reluctant to seek out basic government benefits like public education for their children, increased voting rights, reduced college tuition costs, and greater freedom from law enforcement oppression when the national dialogue on Latino immigration is highly negative. If MCs embrace the president's framing of Latino immigrants as criminals, for example, greater Latino mobilization for the Democratic Party should be expected. This is the exact opposite approach that was prioritized by the RNC just six years ago. In short, Trump's nomination put a stop to much of the progress the Republicans were making, or seeking to make, with Latinos.<sup>5</sup>

There are also reasons to believe that Trump may have less leverage in Congress given his unique background, personality traits, and campaign style. Voters were well aware of his nonexistent experience in elected office, his irreverent behavior on Twitter (and elsewhere), and a good number of scandalous actions in his past that would cripple most presidential campaigns. Trump regularly insulted other Republicans running against him in the 2016 primaries and generally lacked specific details on his ideas to "Make America Great Again." Together, this made him unpopular among many in the elite circles of the Republican Party.<sup>6</sup> Since becoming president his approval ratings have been low, often hovering just above the 40% approval mark. An FBI investigation, which began in May 2017, into his campaign's actions and associations with Russia has cast a cloud over the legitimacy of his presidency. For these reasons it is not necessarily inherent that Republican MCs will fall in line with Trump's hardline immigration agenda.

In sum, the institutional and political context in the 115th Congress provides a setting that complicates the president's ability to push through his uncompromising immigration agenda. On the one hand, unified government and the honeymoon phase of the presidency should lead to legislative success on his key agenda items. On the other hand, the president's hardline approach to immigration, in addition to his aggressive characterizations

of immigrants, does not have mass public support, and the president did not engender allies within the Republican establishment over the course of the 2016 election. It is thus unsurprising that immigration reform—including funding for the border wall and penalties for sanctuary cities—did not make it through the 115th Congress, and that the president has instead relied on executive actions to carry out his agenda items.

## IMMIGRATION LEGISLATION IN THE 115TH CONGRESS

Although congressional action on the president's immigration agenda has largely been stunted, there have been a handful of conservative immigration-related bills introduced in the House but that never made it to the floor. For example, Representative Mike Rogers (R-AL) sponsored H.R. 1813 (Border Wall Funding Act of 2017), but it never received consideration in committee. Representative Steve King (R-IA) sponsored H.R. 140 (Birthright Citizenship Act of 2017), which also failed to be considered in committee. The DACA elimination threats and travel ban actions were initiated by executive decrees, and federal court legal battles ensued shortly thereafter. Congressional attempts to legislate on these matters, such as with H.R. 4873 (DACA Compromise Act of 2018) sponsored by Darrell Issa (R-CA) and H.R. 730 (Equal Protection in Travel Act of 2017) sponsored by Justin Amash (R-MI) similarly failed to receive U.S. House consideration.

Despite this inaction for much of the 115th Congress, two comprehensive reform bills sponsored by Bob Goodlatte (R-VA) made it to the House floor on June 21, 2018. These bills were H.R. 6136 (Border Security and Immigration Reform Act of 2018) and H.R. 4760 (Securing America's Future Act of 2018). H.R. 6136 included \$24.8 billion to fund a border wall, elimination of the diversity immigration visa program, creation of a point system for citizenship, and a new application process for current DACA recipients. On the day this bill received a floor debate, Trump took to Twitter and proclaimed his support for the bill, but also warned that Democrats in the Senate would not allow it to pass in its chamber. H.R. 6136 is perhaps the clearest opportunity for Republican House members

to support a Trump-based immigration plan. The bill failed with a vote of 121–301. All 189 voting House Democrats opposed the bill along with 112 House Republicans.<sup>7</sup> The lack of comprehensive immigration reform, a leading campaign promise by the president, was a big loss for the party and the White House.

Three additional immigration bills that received legislative debate in the U.S. House were on sanctuary cities, immigrant reentry attempts, and gang-affiliated immigrants. First, H.R. 3003 (No Sanctuary for Criminals Act) was sponsored by Goodlatte and sought to block federal grants to cities that shelter illegal immigrants and put forward no attempts to enforce federal immigration laws. Second, H.R. 3004 (Kate's Law), also sponsored by Goodlatte, increased the penalty for those illegal immigrants who reentered, or sought reentry into, the country. Finally, H.R. 3697 (Criminal Alien Gang Member Removal Act) sponsored by Barbara Comstock (R-VA) sought to make it illegal for foreign criminal gang members to enter the United States. All three of these bills passed the House, but failed to receive consideration in the Senate.

This overview of congressional action—or inaction—suggests that the Republican Party is still torn on how to tackle immigration reform. With immigration as a key policy item in the 2018 midterm (Shoichet, 2018), the lack of comprehensive reform on immigration in Congress coupled with the president's unilateral executive actions on immigration issues indicates that there is not uniform support for the president's policies among Republicans in Congress. Indeed, economically conservative Republicans, for example, may be opposed to the border wall in particular because of the estimated \$25 billion cost to pay for it. Although public opinion polling indicates that 77% of Republicans support the plan (CBS News, 2018), fiscally conservative Republicans in Congress might be reluctant to embrace the price tag. Nonetheless, with Trump's high approval ratings with Republicans and as the leader of the party, Trump has the power to set the Republican agenda for many issues of concern to voters during the 2018 midterm elections, and strategic incumbents are well aware of this. Our next step is to examine individual-level support for the president's immigration agenda in Congress with these considerations in mind.

## REPRESENTATIVES AS ADVOCATES: SUPPORT FOR THE PRESIDENT'S IMMIGRATION AGENDA

Although few bills have made it to the floor of Congress and no immigration related legislation has passed both houses, the president does not lack support for his policies from the Republican caucus. Indeed, there have been a handful of bills that have been introduced and debated in Congress, particularly in the House. Even if Republicans on the whole are not falling in line with the president's immigration agenda, the president has like-minded allies and those who are supportive of his hardline immigration approach.

The literature suggests a number of factors may lead MCs to support the president's agenda. Richard Neustadt's (1960) seminal study contends that presidential approval should drive support for his policies in Congress. As Edwards (2009) argues, constituent support for the president can serve as a proxy for the preferences of voters in the district. MCs from districts with high levels of support for the president should be prompted to represent and respond to the preferences of the district by advancing the president's agenda. In doing so, MCs aid their reelection efforts as they are driven by reelection concerns (Mayhew, 1974). With an eye toward their next election, MCs are responsive to their districts by engaging in constituent casework, keeping in touch with the districts' various communities, partaking in fundraising, and pursuing a legislative agenda that is consistent with the values and beliefs of their districts' voters. If voters are supportive of the president and the administration's agenda, the election-legislative behavior linkage should lead MCs to be supportive as well, perhaps even prioritizing the president's agenda in their own legislative activity. Thus, our first hypothesis is that *MCs from districts with higher levels of support for the president will be stronger advocates for Trump's immigration agenda.*

Adding to this, MCs' own election experiences undoubtedly shape their legislative activity. Research shows a consistent linkage between electoral vulnerability and legislative behavior (Herrick & Moore, 1993; Rothenberg & Sanders, 2000; Sulkin, 2005; Victor, 2011). Exit polls show that Trump received around 90% of the vote share from self-identified Republicans. As the de facto leader of the Republican Party, Trump has primed immigration as a top priority for the party. And many within the party base have followed Trump's lead on immigration issue positions—he

is the opinion leader on this issue, and the party faithful have followed suit. This means Republican MCs are faced with a partisan constituency that is largely allegiant to the president's agenda. MCs who are vulnerable to intraparty competition, then, might be more responsive to the president's hardline immigration agenda in order to keep the support of the party base ahead of the 2018 elections to preempt getting "primaried" (Boatright, 2013) from a challenger that aligns more with the president. We expect that *MCs who had primary challenges in the 2016 election will be stronger advocates for Trump's immigration agenda.*

The president is also likely to find support for his immigration agenda from one particular group in the House: the House Freedom Caucus. This caucus, known for its conservative hard line on immigration, is led by Mark Meadows (R-NC) and was responsible in the 115th Congress for the failing of the June 2018 immigration reform package—it was not tough enough.<sup>8</sup> An outgrowth of the Tea Party Movement, the Freedom Caucus's roots are with the Tea Party Caucus (TPC)<sup>9</sup> that was first formed in 2010. The Freedom Caucus pursues an agenda of "limited government, the Constitution and the rule of law, and policies that promote liberty, safety, and prosperity of all Americans."<sup>10</sup> Over time, this caucus has taken an inflexible view on immigration reform by thwarting efforts to reach a compromise since 2012. Though this group has its roots firmly in the fiscally conservative side of the Republican caucus, it also consists of culturally conservative members that represent those within the party who are particularly concerned about the changing "face" of the country in light of a Black president and changing racial demographics of the country (Skocpol & Williamson, 2011; Parker & Barreto, 2013). Given this, our third hypothesis is that *members of the House Freedom Caucus will be stronger advocates for Trump's immigration agenda.*

It is important to note that the Freedom Caucus's hard-line immigration preferences may no longer be a fringe position in the Republican Party. Trump was clear in his support for deportations and building a border wall during the 2016 presidential campaign, and this has been a top priority during the president's first two years in office (and beyond). Some Americans may be convinced that strict immigration reform is necessary based on their overestimation of the number of immigrants living in the United States along with concerns about their burden on social services

and perceived criminal activity (Citrin & Sides, 2008; Parker & Barreto, 2013). These perceptions may lead Republican MCs to adopt and vocalize restrictive immigration stances, even those not in the culturally conservative Freedom Caucus.

In sum, we expect both electoral considerations and MCs' own policy preferences to drive Republican support for the president's immigration agenda in Congress. The election-legislative behavior linkage should manifest in two ways. First, with an eye towards their culturally conservative base, Republican MCs from districts with high support for the president are expected to advocate for the president's immigration plans in the 115th Congress in order to demonstrate responsiveness to their districts. Second, legislators' own experiences with primary challenges in the 2016 election is expected to prompt them to be vocal proponents of the president's hard-line immigration approach in their efforts demonstrate responsiveness to the party base and thus avoid getting "primaried" from a more Trumpesque candidate. Finally, members of the House Freedom Caucus, with legacies of uncompromising and extreme views on immigration, should be more likely to echo the president's views on immigration and immigrants.

## DATA AND METHODOLOGY

We utilize floor statements on immigration in the U.S. House of Representatives in order to gauge individual-level support in Congress for the president's immigration agenda items. Floor statements provide a rich opportunity to examine vocalized support for these policies—including the position, reasoning, and overall tone on the issue. With a membership of 435, the House has tight rules over floor debate on legislation. Debate is typically constrained to a small window of time, sometimes as little as an hour, with very few MCs able to participate (Maltzman & Sigelman, 1996). However, the House provides time for members to make 5-minute "Morning Hour" floor speeches and, at other times, 1-minute floor speeches outside of legislative debates. This floor time is used by MCs to communicate their policy priorities and engage in position taking (Mayhew, 1974) to a national audience, as the speeches are taped by C-SPAN. Research indicates that use of this floor time is often a tool for

the minority party and ideologically extreme MCs to advocate for their political goals (Maltzman & Sigelman, 1996, but also see Rocca, 2007), but also used by party leaders to orchestrate a party message (Harris, 2005). Nevertheless, MCs can decide whether they are going to give a speech and what the content of that speech is, especially in the context of 1- and 5-minute open speech times. Thus, those who want to advocate for or against the president's immigration policy items are sending signals about their own policy priorities in addition to their positions on these issues.

The C-SPAN Video Library provides us with an opportunity to develop a unique dataset of House floor statements in the 115th Congress. Here, we code support and opposition along with the reasoning for this support and opposition on the issues of the border wall, travel ban, and penalties for sanctuary cities in MCs' floor statements from January 3, 2017, to July 31, 2018. This sampled time period includes floor statements during debate on bills directly focused on immigration (such as those discussed above), floor statements during debates on bills not directly focused on immigration, and floor statements made during the Morning Hour and during other general speeches times. The codesheet for this study can be found in Appendix 5.1. Searches in C-SPAN for floor speeches on our three immigration issues were done by the authors.<sup>11</sup> Two trained undergraduate students separately coded the content. For intercoder reliability purposes, agreement percentages between coders and Cohen's Kappa coefficients are provided in Appendix 5.2. Overall, our searches yielded a total of 233 immigration mentions<sup>12</sup> across the three topics considered. Of these 233 mentions, 20 (8.5%) are overlapping comments made by the same legislator at the same time and thus coded two or more times as mentions. For example, a MC saying "I support the border wall and the travel ban" would be a statement coded twice, once for the border wall dataset and again for the travel ban dataset.

Our collection of floor speech data consider a variety of issue positions that may be stated by MCs, and the rationale behind their positions. For proponents of the border wall or the travel ban, for example, a rationale could be that immigrants engage in criminal activity in the United States, are an economic burden, or present a national security risk. For the opponents of Trump's restrictive immigration plans, they may defend their opposition by recognizing the benefits immigrants bring to America's

economy, the historic legacy of accepting immigrants in the United States, or that a ban on Muslims traveling to the United States is racist.

### SUPPORT FOR PRESIDENT TRUMP'S IMMIGRATION POLICIES

Table 5.1 shows the number of mentions on policy issues (support and oppose) and the number of Republican and Democratic MCs who stated their positions. At the outset, it is clear that support and opposition for the Trump immigration agenda items is motivated by partisanship. Looking first at the border wall mentions, our search yielded 66 mentions of support for the border wall spanning 16 Republican MCs, with one Republican MC supporting the border wall with some reservations and no support from Democratic MCs. Republicans' support for the border wall centered on arguments about crime prevention. In only one instance did a Republican argue that Mexico will or should pay for the wall, a prominent argument made by Trump. Here, Steve King (R-IA), a leading voice on immigration reform, said that he's "pretty confident" the

**TABLE 5.1** *U.S. House Support for Trump Immigration Policies (January 3, 2017–July 31, 2018)*

Issue	Number of Republican MCs mentioning	Number of Democratic MCs mentioning	Number of total mentions
Support border wall	16	0	66
Support border wall (with reservations)	1	0	1
Against border wall	0	33	74
Support sanctuary cities penalties	29	0	112
Oppose sanctuary cities penalties	0	9	25
Support travel ban	9	0	36
Oppose travel ban	0	32	133
Negative Latino immigrant mention	29	0	174
Negative Muslim immigrant mention	9	0	60
Positive immigrant mention	6	36	128

*Note:* Mentions equal position stated per sentence in U.S. House floor speech.



president is going to carry out his promise to get the border wall built and paid for by Mexico. Conversely, there were 74 instances of opposition towards the border wall from 33 Democrats. Arguments against the border wall centered on the costs, that it would not work, and support for the contributions immigrants make to the country.

Based on the number of floor statements in the House during our sampled time period, support among Republican MCs for Trump's travel ban was considerably lower than that of the border wall (which is low already). No Republican argued to ban all Muslim immigrants, but some were rather supportive of banning some segments of the immigrant pool and/or enhanced screenings of immigrants. Nine Republican MCs made floor statements in support of this measure with these caveats, with a total of 36 mentions. Republicans supportive of the president's executive order generally contended that it is not a "Muslim Ban" and that it was consistently misrepresented as such by the news media. In their support for the executive order, though, the reasoning rested on homeland security. Democrats attacked Trump for issuing the order. Their arguments centered on the ban being unconstitutional and racist. Democrats also disagreed with Republicans over the meaning of the executive order. Brenda Lawrence (D-MI), for example, argued: "A Muslim ban is a Muslim ban. It remains hateful, discriminatory, and goes against our American values. . . . This Muslim and refugee ban continues to be part of a dangerous and immoral agenda against a religion, people of color, and immigrants." In total, there were 133 mentions against the travel ban across 32 Democratic MCs.

Although Republicans were collectively not apt to take on the issues of the border wall and the travel ban, they did take a hardline stance on sanctuary cities. There were 112 mentions by 29 Republicans in opposition to sanctuary cities for undocumented immigrants. During the debate on the No Sanctuary for Criminals Act, Doug Collins (R-GA) focused his comments on the rule of law, whereby states and cities are not adhering to federal laws, and that sanctuary cities "endanger lives as well as setting dangerous precedent" that local law enforcement does not need to cooperate with federal law enforcement. Collins also argued that sanctuary cities pose a problem "with the [public's] confidence that laws apply equally to everyone in American communities." Republicans included in their statements stories of how sanctuary cities harbor criminals that are not in the

United States legally and the tragic outcomes that have arisen as a result. Democrats were comparatively more silent on this issue. There are only 25 mentions of support for sanctuary cities among eight Democratic MCs. During the debate on the No Sanctuary for Criminals Act, Jim McGovern (D-MA) stated that the bill “reeks of prejudice” and is not meant to solve problems, but rather to “demonize all immigrants as criminals” and “punish cities that don’t embrace the radical views of the anti-immigrant right wing of the Republican Party.” Democrats also contended that sanctuary cities are safer for immigrants and nonimmigrants alike.

Three trends emerge in our content analysis of support for the Trump’s immigration policies. First, the Republicans and Democrats who discussed these issues in floor statements are diametrically opposed on these issues. Republicans are not speaking out against the president’s immigration policies and Democrats are not supporting the president’s policies. Second, both Republicans and Democrats are supportive of the policies that advantage their party, particularly for the border wall and sanctuary cities. A June 2018 Gallup poll suggests that 41% of the public supports building a border wall (Newport, 2018). Alternatively, a Harvard-Harris poll from February 2017 indicates that upwards of 80% of the public are opposed to the efforts of sanctuary cities (Easley, 2017). Thus, it is politically beneficial for Democrats to attack the former issue and Republicans to attack the latter. Third, both Democrats and Republicans use emotional appeals. For the Democrats, these are stories of immigrants as a positive cultural influence in the country. For the Republicans, these are stories of undocumented immigrants who have committed violent crimes in the United States.

Our next step is to take a closer look at congressional Republican support for the president’s immigration agenda. We develop models that predict support for the border wall, the travel ban, and sanctuary cities penalties. Our unit of analysis in these models is the individual MC. Included are members that served from the start of the 115th Congress through July 31, 2018. Members who resigned, died, or began their terms in the House of Representatives after the January 3, 2017, start date are omitted. This allows for a comparison across legislators. In total, there are 229 Republican MCs in the dataset.<sup>13</sup>

We created dichotomous variables as dependent variables that indicate a legislator's support for each of the three immigration policies (border wall, travel ban, and penalties for sanctuary cities). For example, our search yielded 66 mentions of support for the border wall by 16 Republican MCs (a somewhat surprisingly low number of vocal supporters). We aggregate mentions across each policy area to create a variable that indicates whether an MC mentioned support for the policy at least one time in a floor statement (coded 1 for yes and 0 for no). Our focus is not on the volume of MCs' support for policies, but rather whether MCs vocalize support during the sampled time frame. A dichotomous variable captures this conceptualization. We follow this same approach for measuring support on the president's executive travel ban order and support for penalizing sanctuary cities.

The independent variables in these models encompass a variety of district and MC characteristics. We assess the impact of district-level factors on support for Trump's immigration policies. First, we expect that MCs from districts with high levels of electoral support for the president (*District Vote % for Trump*) to be more supportive of his immigration policies. The mean level of support for Trump in the 2016 election was 57% in Republican congressional districts, in contrast to a mean of 31.8% in Democratic congressional districts. Similarly, we expect that MCs whose own electoral fortunes have been in question via intraparty competition in the previous election cycle (*Primary Vote %*) might be pushed to the ideological right as they seek to be responsive to their party base. The average Republican MC in the 115th Congress had a vote share of 78% in the 2016 primaries, with 12% of these Republicans obtaining less than 50% of the vote share in their primary elections. Data on both of these variables are collected from *The Almanac of American Politics* (Cohen, Barnes, Cook, & Barone, 2017).

In addition, we expect that members of the House Freedom Caucus will align more with the president's policies on immigration. Its list of members is not published, so we classify members through an online news media search of those who have been identified as Freedom Caucus members in the 114th and 115th Congresses. The sources include *Politico*, *Newsweek*, and *The Hill*. There are 39 Republican MCs coded as a House

*Freedom Caucus Member* in the dataset. This variable allows us to capture not simply whether conservative members are more likely to advocate for the president's immigration agenda, but whether the MCs' ideological positions on immigration in particular fall in line with Trump's stances.

Models of representation also stipulate that MCs are responsive to their constituents in the district. With just over a quarter of Latino voters supporting Trump in the 2016 election (Krogstad & Lopez, 2016), and Trump's immigration policies largely rebuked by this segment of the population, we expect that pressures from the district's Latino population decreases MCs' support for the president's hardline immigration policies. We incorporate the variable *District Latino Population %* to capture the district's Latino population (from 2015) as recorded by the U.S. Census Bureau. At the same time, however, evidence suggests that support for the president's immigration policies has been most fervent in areas for which there has been a growing Latino population (Newman, Sha, & Collingwood, 2018). Thus, it may be that Republican MCs are responsive to this group of constituents, those feeling threatened by demographic changes in their community. As such, we create a variable to capture this change in district-level Latino population, *% Change in Latino Population* (from 2010 to 2015). The mean change in Latino population during this time frame is 0.56%.<sup>14</sup>

Another independent variable considers those Republican MCs retiring or running for another office (i.e., the Senate or governor), but still finishing their term to the end of 2018. There are 33 Republican MCs coded as *Retiring*. Finally, the model includes a structural control variable for *Seniority*. This variable is measured as a count for the number of years the MC has been in the House of Representatives.

Figure 5.1 graphically shows logit regression coefficient estimates along with their 95% confidence intervals (Jann, 2014). The results of the models predict support for Trump's immigration policies among Republicans in the 115th Congress. The dependent variables are dichotomous, indicating whether the MC mentioned support for the policy in a floor speech.<sup>15</sup> At the outset it is clear that Freedom Caucus members are more supportive of these policies. These legislators are 7% more likely than their Republican colleagues to support Trump's border wall proposal, 5.4% more supportive

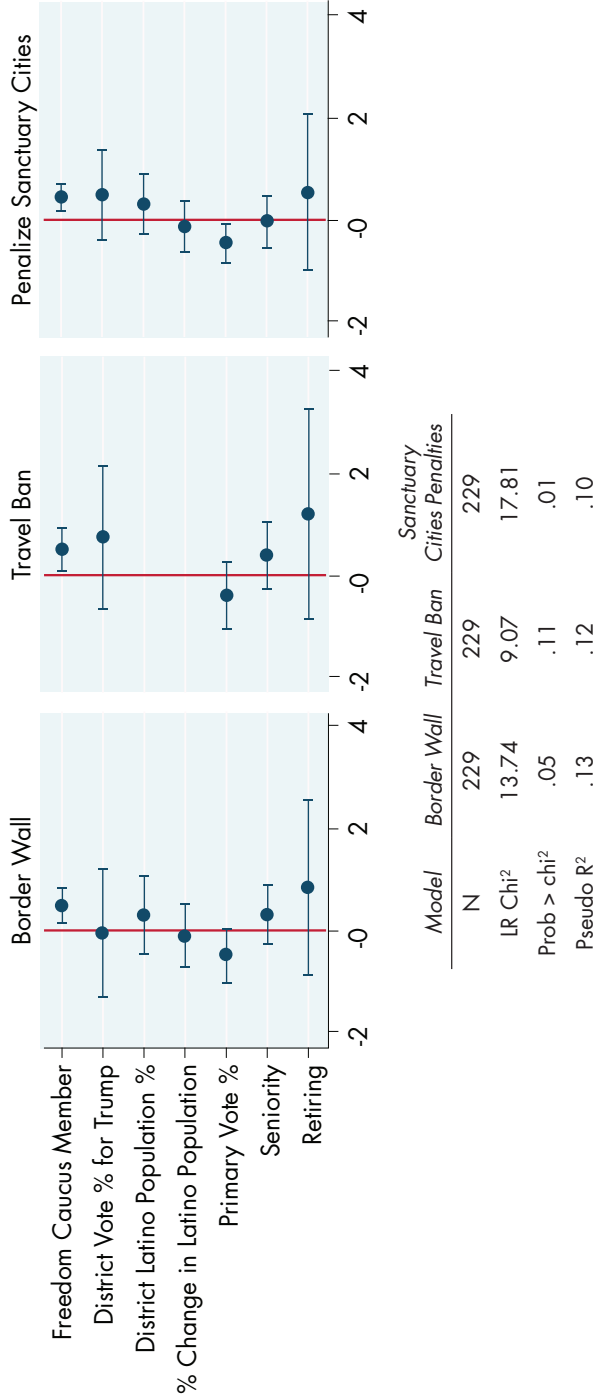


FIGURE 5.1 Republican support in the U.S. House for border wall, travel ban, and sanctuary cities policies.

of the travel ban, and nearly 9% more likely to express opposition to the efforts of sanctuary cities.<sup>16</sup>

However, the results are mixed on the election and district-level variables. MCs from districts with higher levels of support for Trump in the 2016 election are no more likely to be supportive of his immigration policies in floor speeches. And, the percentage of Latinos in the district has no effect on legislators' floor statements on immigration policy. However, there is a clear connection between an MC's own vote share in the 2016 primary election and support for the strict immigration proposals. MCs that are electorally vulnerable within their parties tend to be more supportive of the border wall and penalties for sanctuary cities compared to their partisan colleagues that are more electorally secure. Predicted probabilities estimate that, in the 115th Congress, the most electorally threatened legislators in the 2016 primaries were 17% more likely to vocalize their opposition to sanctuary cities and 11% more supportive of the border wall than their Republican colleagues who ran in more uncompetitive races in this election.

## GENERALIZATIONS ABOUT IMMIGRANTS

Our analysis up to this point indicates that Trump has an ally in the Freedom Caucus, at least in terms of immigration policy.<sup>17</sup> The consistent support in floor speeches for the president's immigration agenda by those in the Freedom Caucus coupled with the significant effects for those whom are electorally vulnerable in their primaries indicates that a select few members of the Republican Party are prioritizing immigration in their floor activity. Our next step is to assess the ways in which House members talk about immigration and immigrants. Here, we are particularly interested in the tone of floor speeches. For each immigration mention, we code whether the statement included negative language directed towards immigrants, Latinos, and Muslims.

One of Trump's typical phrases on the campaign trail was to include portrayals of Latino immigrants as criminals (e.g., "rapists" and "murderers"). Similarly, he expressed concerns about chain migration, immigrants "taking our jobs," and immigrants taking advantage of the U.S. taxpayer.

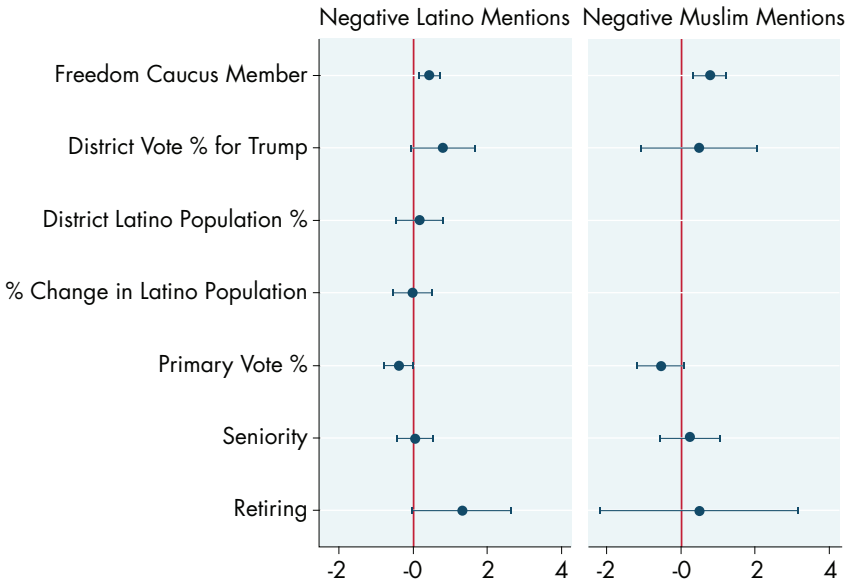
We code any such characterizations of Latino immigrants in such a hostile manner as negative. As seen in Table 5.1, there are 174 such mentions in the dataset from 29 Republican MCs.<sup>18</sup> Several of these mentions are during the legislative debate on sanctuary cities with narratives about undocumented immigrants that broke the law, as well as generalizations about Latino immigrants as a whole. For example, in a floor speech on December 7, 2017, Representative Ted Poe (R-TX) provides examples of undocumented immigrants murdering U.S. citizens. He uses examples to make generalizations about Latinos and why Congress needs to support the president's policies so that we do not let people enter the country who "can hurt us." He then argues that the United States should not be admitting people that do not speak or write English. There are some instances of Democrats acknowledging illegal acts of undocumented immigrants, but these examples were immediately qualified as an exception to the norm. Given this, we did not code this as a negative characterization of Latinos. There are 128 instances of positive remarks on immigrants from 6 Republican MCs and 26 Democratic MCs.

Our second focus is on characterizations of Muslims. President Trump's Executive Order 13769 (Protecting the Nation from Foreign Terrorist Entry) created travel restrictions for those from seven Muslim-majority countries. Given that the order was often framed as a ban on Muslims, we seek to investigate whether MCs are connecting terrorism to Islam. Specifically, we code whether MCs linked Muslims (visitors or immigrants) to national security and terrorism, or if statements about the nation's threat of adhering to sharia law are made. There are 60 such mentions by nine Republican House members. Louie Gohmert (R-TX) was a leading voice in support for the travel ban and argued that although not all Muslims were dangerous, extremists were using principles of Islam to engage in terrorist activity and that the ban was thus justified.

We followed the same approach as in the earlier analysis to create dichotomous dependent variables (*Negative Latino Mentions* and *Negative Muslim Mentions*) that capture whether an MC discussed Latinos and Muslims in a negative light. Given the previous findings, we expect that the same variables, *Freedom Caucus Member* and *Primary Vote %*, to correlate with negative characterizations of Latinos and Muslims. This examination can provide more evidence that the Freedom Caucus and those who are

electorally vulnerable to intraparty competition are more closely aligned with the president's philosophy on immigrants from Latin America and Middle Eastern countries.

We include the same control variables as in our earlier analyses, except we omit the variables *District Latino Population %* and *% Change in Latino Population* from the model predicting negative characterizations of Muslims. Figure 5.2 presents the results. First, members of the House Freedom Caucus are more hostile towards Latino immigrants than other Republicans. Estimated predicted probabilities suggest that these MCs are 9% more likely to characterize Latino immigrants in a negative light. They are also 11.5% more likely to focus their comments on Muslims as



Model	Negative Immigration Mentions	Negative Travel Ban Mentions
N	229	229
LR Chi <sup>2</sup>	18.80	15.58
Prob > chi <sup>2</sup>	.01	.01
Pseudo R <sup>2</sup>	.11	.21

FIGURE 5.2 Republican views toward immigrants.



terrorists and a national security threat. *Primary Vote %* also continues to exert an effect, with the most vulnerable MCs nearly 14.5% more likely to take on a negative tone towards Latinos in their floor speeches compared to those more electorally secure legislators.

## CONCLUSION

President Trump has achieved much during his first two years in office. Internationally, he worked on renegotiating NAFTA, implemented targeted import taxes, and met with North Korea to work toward greater security in the region. Domestically, Trump passed a major income tax cut for individuals and corporations—a plan championed by congressional Republicans. Other key legislative accomplishments in the 115th Congress include increasing benefits for veterans, elimination of the PPACA individual mandate, increasing opioid prevention and treatment efforts, and creating stiffer penalties for human trafficking, just to name a few. Thus, Republicans in Congress had many accomplishments to campaign on in the 2018 election. Even still, comprehensive immigration reform, a central issue in the 2016 election cycle, was not one of these accomplishments. Overall, our data analyses suggest that most Republican MCs simply were not supportive of the president's immigration agenda during the 115th Congress, and, as such, they largely avoided addressing the topic in their floor speeches.

As mentioned above, Trump's hardline approach to immigration reform has consequences on the treatment and experiences of Latinos in America. A counterattack to these out-group anxiety messages expressed by Trump and some in Congress are congressional efforts to find compassionate methods for immigrant Latinos to obtain citizenship and reduce the number of undocumented immigrants living in the United States. If these efforts in Congress are bipartisan, the message becomes even stronger. With a powerful Freedom Caucus holding onto hardline conservative solutions to immigration, the nation moves farther from finding such compassionate and reasonable reforms.

## APPENDIX 5.1: CODING C-SPAN VIDEO LIBRARY CONTENT

Two undergraduate students were trained in content analysis for this project. Each student was given the same grouping of C-SPAN videos from the authors and directed to code the floor speeches based on the following codesheet.

Coder \_\_\_\_\_

Data Set \_\_\_\_\_

Video # \_\_\_\_\_

### *Border Wall*

Support \_\_\_\_\_

Support with reservations/concerns \_\_\_\_\_

Oppose \_\_\_\_\_

Costs too high \_\_\_\_\_

Will not work \_\_\_\_\_

Mexico will pay for it \_\_\_\_\_

### *Sanctuary Cities*

Support their efforts \_\_\_\_\_

Oppose their efforts \_\_\_\_\_

### *Muslim Travel Ban*

Support for an immigration ban on all Muslims entering

U.S. \_\_\_\_\_

Support for a partial immigration ban of persons some Islamic countries \_\_\_\_\_

Support for stronger immigration screening of persons from Islamic countries \_\_\_\_\_

Oppose immigration ban directed towards Muslims \_\_\_\_\_

### *Muslim Ban Support Reasoning*

Extremist terrorism/Islamic threat \_\_\_\_\_

Sharia law threat \_\_\_\_\_

***Muslim Ban Oppose Reasoning***

Unconstitutional (due process, gov. establishment of religion, or other) \_\_\_\_\_

Racist \_\_\_\_\_

**APPENDIX 5.2: INTERCODER RELIABILITY ESTIMATES**

Variable	Observed agreement (%)	Expected agreement (%) <sup>a</sup>	Cohen's Kappa	Standard error
<i>Border wall speeches</i>				
Border wall support	73.2	36.6	0.58	0.07
Border wall reasoning	76.3	49.8	0.53	0.07
Anti-immigration mentions	94.9	76.0	0.78	0.10
Positive immigration mentions	88.7	78.9	0.46	0.10
<i>Sanctuary cities speeches</i>				
Sanctuary cities support	81.0	53.9	0.59	0.10
Anti-immigration mentions	81.0	50.2	0.62	0.13
Positive immigration mentions	93.1	84.2	0.56	0.13
<i>Travel ban speeches</i>				
Muslim travel ban support	69.4	39.4	0.50	0.08
Muslim travel ban reasoning	96.5	82.7	0.80	0.09
Anti-immigration mentions	94.1	90.0	0.41	0.11

<sup>a</sup>Expected agreement should be interpreted as the *by chance* agreement level between coders. Cohen's Kappa should be interpreted as follows: <0 = Poor agreement; 0.01–0.2 = Slight agreement; 0.21–0.4 = Fair agreement; 0.41–0.6 = Moderate agreement; 0.61–0.8 = Substantial agreement; 0.81–0.99 = Almost perfect agreement (Landis & Koch, 1977).

## ACKNOWLEDGMENT

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## NOTES

1. See *The New York Times* (2010) coverage for further details.

2. In response to the collapse of negotiations on immigration reform in the 113th Congress (2013–2014), Obama issued an executive action that both expanded the 2012 Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) and delayed deportations for those who have resided in the United States for at least 5 years (Ehrenfreund, 2014).

3. Arrests and deportations from ICE have increased during the Trump administration, but apprehensions by U.S. Border Patrol agents have decreased during this same time (Associated Press, 2017).

4. Henceforth called “travel ban.”

5. This is not to say that the Latinos are strongly opposed to Trump. Indeed, not all Latinos are in favor of open borders or other strongly liberal approaches to immigration reform. Further, economic considerations deeply affect all Americans. Evidence suggests the strong economy and Trump’s tax cut plan improved his approval among Latinos in 2018 (Cortes, 2018).

6. From their public statements, this unpopularity was only temporary for some Republicans like Ted Cruz (R-TX) and Rand Paul (R-KY), though.

7. H.R. 4760 failed by a vote of 193–231 on June 21, 2018, as well. It eliminated the diversity visa program also, chain migration (also known as *family reunification*), strengthened immigration deportation powers for the Department of Homeland Security, along with other provisions.

8. Specifically H.R. 6136 and H.R. 4760 (discussed above).

9. No longer in operation, as the Freedom Caucus replaced it.

10. The caucus has no official government website. This statement was taken from its bio on the House Freedom Caucus Twitter account @freedomcaucus.

11. The key terms used in our C-SPAN search were “border wall,” “Muslim ban,” “travel ban,” “Trump + ban + entry,” and “sanctuary cities.” The results from these searches are video clips, some of which are brief segments of an MC

floor speech while at other times the entire speech is prompted. If a video was unrelated, coders double-checked with the text of the speech also provided in the C-SPAN results.

12. A “mention” is considered if a position of interest (from the code sheet) is stated in a sentence. Thus, multiple mentions could exist per speech. However, for our regression models below, these variables from the content analysis are dichotomous (discussed further below).

13. There are 156 Democrats in the dataset as well, but Democrats are omitted from the analyses below, given that our primary interest is with House support for strict immigration policies and no Democrats voiced such support on the House floor.

14. These district Latino population variables are dropped in the travel ban models.

15. The independent variables are standardized from 0 to 1 for presentation purposes.

16. All predicted probabilities are calculated by holding the other variables at their mean values.

17. Trump's relationship with the Freedom Caucus was rocky at first, with the caucus temporarily blocking his measure to repeal only portions of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (PPACA). However, this relationship has developed into an alliance whereby members of the Caucus have been the president's fiercest supporters, particularly in terms of the FBI investigation led by Robert Mueller (Bacon, 2018).

18. There is no incident of a negative mention by a Democratic MC.

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## CHAPTER 6

# USING THE JUDICIARY: C-SPAN, JUDICIAL ACTIVISM, AND THE CONSTITUTIVE FUNCTION OF LAW IN THE TRUMP ERA

*Joseph Sery*

The hyperpartisanship that has defined American political discourse in the recent past and the advent of the Trump presidency have intensified the use of the judiciary as a means of ideological identification and division. Whether it's the travel ban, Russian voting interference and campaign collusion, immigration, gerrymandering, religious liberty, voter suppression, the nominations of Neil Gorsuch and Brett Kavanaugh, affirmative action, or the litany of other issues on the table, the administration, political candidates, and broader public use the ongoing legal drama as a means to construct and signal their ideological commitments to key democratic values for their constituents. Understood rhetorically, ideological appeals direct the attention of the public and offer them a grammar with which to address social values and their legal implications. Issues concerning the judiciary are one of, if not the most, prominent site for public argument about our values as a country, the direction we are headed, and the role of

the judiciary throughout the process. Importantly, these issues transcend the technical sphere of legal argumentation as they enter public debate.

In order to better understand the great divide in the American public, this essay examines the ways in which public arguments about the judiciary serve as enthymematic, ideological signals wherein politicians and public intellectuals invoke the judiciary in order to perform their own ideological identities while simultaneously constituting their audience. Drawing from the rhetorical tradition—particularly Mary Ann Glendon’s (1991) idea of “rights talk,” Edwin Black’s (1970) “second persona,” James Boyd White’s (2004) conception of law as distinctly constitutive, and Michael Calvin McGee’s (1980) “ideograph”—I argue that politicians and public figures turn to law as a rhetorical object through which they identify and divide the public. This focus on rhetoric and ideology stresses the essential role that discourse plays in the construction and reconstruction of identity. Whereas some scholars argue that ideology is an important defining characteristic for elites but not the public writ large (Achen & Bartels, 2016; Kinder & Kalmoe, 2017), I draw from the critical tradition that posits ideology as inherent to the human condition (Deetz & Kersten, 1983). Ideology not only is a set of beliefs and attitudes but also shapes our understanding of what exists, what is good, and what is possible (Therbon, 1980). While individual speeches may not sway the public in a traditional, Aristotelian sense, they nonetheless direct the attention of the audience and provide a set of what Kenneth Burke (1969) calls terministic screens that reflect, select, and deflect particular aspects of reality. When it comes to ideology and the judiciary, the invocations of the court, whether to celebrate or decry, craft a public philosophy of law that attempts to frame what constitutes appropriate judgment and how this ought to function within American democratic culture. These discourses also attempt to connect seemingly disparate spheres of argumentation. On the one hand is the technical sphere of law, with its highly regulated rules and dense legalese, and on the other hand is the messier, somewhat mercurial public sphere, which plays fast and loose with terms and ideas while being guided by more ideological concerns. As such, the political figures using the judiciary as a means of constituting an audience should be understood as navigating and exploiting the tensions within civic culture.

After establishing the constitutive function of law and the ways it can be used to call multiple publics into being, I turn to the ideograph of “judicial activism” and utilize the C-SPAN Video Library to illustrate how rhetors draw from the rhetorical power of the term to signal their ideological commitments while they craft competing ideas of and expectations for the judicial branch. In particular, I will address the ways in which judicial activism has been utilized as an ideological token since the inauguration of Donald Trump. Unlike much of the work in rhetoric and law, this project addresses the often-neglected “publicness” of the judiciary. As such, I am not so much interested in the law *qua* law, but in how the law and judiciary are used as rhetorical, ideological tools in constructing and maintaining the identities of the speaker and audience. In doing so, political leaders and pundits are able to marshal the court’s legitimacy in order to pursue partisan ends.

## CONSTITUTING AN AUDIENCE

Law holds a prominent role in the public sphere in its ability to frame behavior and legitimate state action. Landmark cases such as *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* and *Roe v. Wade* serve as catalysts both for reform and opposition. Despite the prominence of generation-defining cases, law conceives of itself as an insular, technical sphere with its own set of norms, dense legalese discourse, and professional gatekeeping. Yet, in recent decades, legal discourse has started seeping out of its technical sphere and into everyday argument. As legal and political theorist Mary Ann Glendon (1991) argues, “Legal discourse has not only become the single most important tributary to political discourse, but it has crept into the languages that Americans employ around the kitchen table, in the neighborhood, and in their diverse communities of memory and mutual aid” (p. 3). Law, for good or ill, has infused itself into contemporary public discourse and goes well beyond its traditional bounds, but with different parameters of accountability. Law may be a technical discourse, but it faces nontechnical resistance when it enters a changing, contingent public discussion. When this happens, the norms and processes that undergird

the legal system do not restrict public opinions on the issues before the court. Rather, ideology collapses legality and morality into one, yet still adorns the veil of blind justice.

While the judiciary is guided by the various technical restrictions that frame their judgments, including the Constitution, statutes, precedent, accepted norms of adjudication, and the facts of a given case, the broader public is not beholden to such limitations and understands them in different, sometimes contradictory ways. That does not minimize the rhetorical power of judicial issues in the public sphere, as they are prominent figures in public argument. Rather, they are imbued with an ideological commitment that often makes them forceful rhetorical frameworks. The judiciary is not absent ideology (Sunstein, Schkade, Ellman, & Sawicki, 2006), yet they are nonetheless reined in by their institutional duty. The public has no such obligation (or, at least, tends to abandon it more readily), so when the judiciary is invoked during public argument, the rhetor often does so as a way to signal their ideological commitments to their audience. Although the specific cases are no doubt important, the greater concern is about the values that the cases underscore. If we accept Glendon's (1991) argument that "rights talk" is becoming increasingly pervasive, these invocations are becoming more prominent and more powerful. Moreover, the hyperpartisan tribalism tends to exacerbate these rhetorical appeals and their impact.

In order to understand why and how politicians and public intellectuals use the judiciary in this way, one must understand the relationship between rhetor and audience. Edwin Black's (1970) notion of the "second persona" is a useful starting point when thinking about the ways in which a political rhetor invokes the judiciary so as to indicate their ideological orientation and direct the audience. One of the reasons politicians turn to issues related to the judiciary is because the law is so intimately connected to morality and ethical norms. Despite legal philosophers arguing otherwise, the public tends to view the judiciary as the ultimate defender (or, depending on the issue, usurper) of morality (Glendon, 1991). When the legislative and executive branches fail us, we turn to the priests of the judicial branch to offer salvation as a testament to their higher calling. Their judgments on key issues often carry a heavy moral weight

and become touchstones for future arguments in the public sphere. Black argues, “Moral judgments, however balanced, however elaborately qualified, are nonetheless categorical. Once rendered, they shape decisively one’s relationship to the object judged. . . . Moral judgments coerce one’s perceptions of things” (p. 109). As the final arbiter of the Constitution, the Supreme Court sets the tone, not only for the judiciary in the form of precedent, but also by establishing the discursive framework through which the public understands the issue, whether or not they agree with the conclusion. Consider, for example, the issue of privacy. Although it is not mentioned in the Constitution, privacy has become a cornerstone democratic value, due in large part to the Supreme Court’s continuous articulation, expansion, and reification.

Black (1970) continues, claiming, “It is through moral judgments that we sort out our past, that we coax the networks and the continuities out of what has come before, that we disclose the precursive patterns that may in turn present themselves to us as potentialities, and thus extend our very freedom” (p. 109). Given the judiciary’s role in reviewing, maintaining, and dissolving important issues concerning public morality, it is no wonder why politicians return to its well as a way to express “eternal signs of internal states” (p. 110). As the judiciary and public arguments about its decisions coerce attention and perception, they create what Kenneth Burke (1969) calls a “terministic screen” through which one understands the issue. He writes, “Men seek for vocabularies that will be faithful *reflections* of reality. To this end, they must develop vocabularies that are *selections* of reality. And any selection of reality must, in certain circumstances, function as a *deflection* of reality” (p. 59). All language and discourse functions as a filter that impacts perception. When it comes to public arguments about the judiciary, the terministic screens create and reinforce a particular ideological worldview that can be utilized for rhetoric effect. By connecting Black’s idea of the second person and Burke’s understanding of terministic screens, the symbolic function of rhetoric connects rhetor and audience through language.

Black’s (1970) notion of the second persona, or the “implied auditor” of a rhetorical discourse, is useful as it illustrates *how* the ideological signaling takes place and the impact it has on the audience. Black calls

attention to the “tokens” that serve as terministic screens and indicate who the rhetor perceives the implied auditor to be (p. 112). In the 1950s, argues Black, the token “communism as cancer” was an oft-repeated trope that illustrated the ideological worldview of those who invoked the term. The rhetorical salience of the phrase and the ideological attitude it summoned stoked the fear and paranoia surrounding the Cold War and enabled rhetors to capitalize. Notably, the idea of the second persona is not limited to who the audience is perceived to be—their values, cultural norms, ideological worldview, and other significant traits. The second persona also indicates what the rhetor *wants the audience to be*. “In discourse of the Radical Right,” Black argues, “as in all rhetorical discourse, we can find enticements not simply to believe something, but to *be* something” (p. 119). There is a constant flux between what the audience is and what the audience can be, and the discursive tokens reflecting the second persona serve to transition from the former to the latter.

Michael Calvin McGee (1999) echoes this idea as he examines the problem of labeling particular views or beliefs as belonging to “the people.” McGee argues that “the people” are created in a speech act if individuals make the choice to agree with the speaker:

When “one man stands up as the proclaimer of a general will,” what he says, *at the time he originally says it*, is a fiction, for it is his personal interpretation of his “people’s” history. Though he warrants his argument with abundant examples, he creates, not a description of *reality*, but rather a political *myth*. (p. 344)

Whether it’s the idea of “communism as cancer” or “judicial activism,” the group of individuals composing said “people” must accept the political myth and thus live in “mass illusion” (p. 345). The desire to maintain a collective identity belies the need to perceive the ideological tokens as oriented toward similar goals. Given its pervasiveness throughout U.S. public argument, legal discourse has a distinct constitutive function: it creates, maintains, and changes our ideas of what it means to be a public and a people.

James Boyd White (2004) underscores the constitutive role of law:

To conceive of law as a rhetorical and social system, a way in which we use an inherited language to talk to each other and to maintain a community, suggests in a new way that the heart of law is what we always knew it was: an open hearing in which one point of view, one construction of language and reality, is tested against another. (p. 273)

Law is a primary space where the public deliberates about its collective values and ambitions. Law impacts everyone and carries with it the power of the state. As White conceives of the constitutive function of law, rhetors are attempting to call a public into existence with their interpretations of what constitutes good legal judgment as a way to assess the successes and failures of the judiciary in particular and institutional power more broadly. Such rhetorical engagement is not reserved for lawyers, judges, and other legal professionals; the broader public plays an active role as well. In doing so, rhetors invoking the judiciary not only signal the goals of their “team,” but, because they view their team as inherently right and good, they are also creating an idea of democratic culture with particular values and ideals. Rather than persuading the audience through classic argumentation, they are crafting an identity they want their audience to embody. White (2004) continues:

It is the constitution of a world by the distribution of authority within it; it establishes the terms on which its actors may talk in conflict or cooperation among themselves. The law establishes roles and relations and voices, positions from which and audiences to which one may speak, and it gives us speakers the materials and methods of a discourse. It is a way of creating a rhetorical community over time. It is this discourse, working in the social context of its own creation, this language in the fullest sense of the term, that *is* the law. It makes us members of a common world. (p. 266)

Under his understanding, the community created by law is always in negotiation, but it is singular: *a* community. The state of contemporary public discourse, however, suggests that multiple, competing, contradictory

communities (or publics) are being created and maintained. Despite living in the same country, liberals and conservatives in the United States appear to be living in two different worlds. Reinforced by a self-imposed echo chamber that becomes distilled into group polarization, liberal and conservative rhetorics are increasingly “us vs. them” and often use the judiciary to stoke the flames of resentment. Their idea of what constitutes good and appropriate legal judgment may not represent a thorough, consistent legal philosophy, nor is it able to withstand strict challenges from legal scholars. Being unbound by the technical limitations of expertise, the broader public relies upon their ideological commitments to undergird their idea of what good legal judgment ought to look like. Moreover, they want to align themselves with good judgment because it serves as an institutional validation and a way in which to rally in opposition to their political opponents who seemingly flaunt the rule of law.

Examining the ideological tokens that contribute to such divisive worldviews offers a glimpse into the way in which each public is conceived and the moral touchstones guiding their self-conception. When it comes to the judiciary, the options are numerous, but for the sake of time and space only one will be examined in this essay: judicial activism.

## **JUDICIAL ACTIVISM: A BRIEF HISTORY**

In C-SPAN’s annual “Cram for the Exam” series, which helps to prepare students for their upcoming AP U.S. Government exam, a caller asked, “What is the difference between judicial activism and judicial restraint?” Andrew Conneen, a high school teacher, responded by describing the common law tradition from which the U.S. judiciary emerged:

Judicial activism and judicial restraint, it’s really this concept of common law that our judges in the American system that we inherited from the British have a lot of deference in terms of deciding how to interpret law. Then the judges are supposed to follow that precedent, or *stare decisis*, over the course of that law, and it’s really a rare thing, a landmark case if you will, when the Supreme



Court overturns that precedent. So if a Supreme Court justice is going against that precedent or going against established law they're known as an activist. And if they're more constrained, if they're reading very strictly what the law and the Constitution says, and they don't want to infer what was meant by the law, then they're using more constraint or what we sometimes call original interpretation. (2018, May 5)

His co-panelist, fellow teacher Daniel Larsen, reinforces this interpretation by noting how activist judges are more willing to “bring in the times” and embrace the “living Constitution,” which liberals and Democrats “tend to favor.” The conservatives and Republicans, he argues, are more inclined toward judicial restraint as they “let the legislative branch do the politicking and the courts merely arbitrate disputes in the law as the law is specifically written.” Contemporary public argument echoes these characterizations, with liberals being associated with judicial activism and conservatives being associated with judicial restraint. Yet, such a description ignores the many ways in which each group has their own particular domains of restraint and activism. These are rhetorically negotiated spaces with each side vying for their framework and reinforcing the ideologies of their respective audiences. Nevertheless, judicial activism has earned a bad reputation, and judges, politicians, and pundits avoid associating decisions with which they agree and judicial activism.

The concern of judicial activism has been hanging over the judicial branch ever since Chief Justice Marshall legitimized the power of judicial review in *Marbury v. Madison* (1803), which, ironically, could be viewed as an example of judicial activism. The sentiment behind judicial activism is best captured in Chief Justice Roberts's (Figure 6.1) metaphorical turn in his opening remarks in the nomination hearing: “Judges are like umpires,” argued Roberts. “Umpires don't make the rules; they apply them. The role of an umpire and a judge is critical. They make sure everybody plays by the rules, but it is a limited role. Nobody ever went to a ball game to see the umpire” (C-SPAN, 2005, September 12).

Roberts later reinforced his analogy by claiming it was his job “to call balls and strikes, and not to pitch or bat.” The courts have the power to



FIGURE 6.1 Chief Justice John Roberts confirmation hearing.

review the constitutional validity of laws and cases, but must refrain from stepping on the toes of the legislature within their sphere of interpretation. Juxtaposing the idea of judicial activism are calls for “judicial restraint” and “judicial neutrality,” which implicitly draws attention to the separation of powers and the need for judges to stay in their Constitutional lane. Furthermore, restraint and neutrality reinforce the idea that justice is blind and judges are bound by the rule of law and nothing else.

In practice, legal judgment is not so simple. For legal theorists and philosophers of law, there is no settled idea of what constitutes good legal judgment, even though each approach likes to advocate their superiority. Moreover, there is no guidance in the Constitution as to *how* the Constitution ought to be interpreted by the judiciary branch, which is why so many models of judgment have been created and deployed throughout the history of the Court. There are also numerous ways in which the Constitution and statutes remain ambiguous given the language used, thus making a narrow interpretation on a complicated, nuanced case all but impossible. Justice Potter Stewart captured this sentiment well in his famous description of pornography: “I know it when I see it.” Can the same be said for what Kenneth Burke described as the “generalized wishes” of the Constitution? Do we know liberty when we see it? Or equality? What about privacy, which has been *read into* the Constitution but does not appear in the text? One of Laurence Tribe’s (2008) recent books, *The Invisible Constitution*, makes a strong case for a number of these “invisible” influences that are part and parcel of any judicial decision.

Originally coined by Arthur Schlesinger, judicial activism was used to describe the judicial temperaments of some of the sitting justices (Kmiec, 2004). However, Schlesinger did not use the term as an indictment of errant responsibility; rather, activism was juxtaposed against restraint to illustrate two distinct views of the relationship between law and politics. They each have their strengths and their flaws, and neither is justified to be the “correct” judicial mindset. Despite such ambiguity, lamentations of judicial activism have been a prevalent talking point for politicians and the public for quite some time. Characterizing judges as activists is shorthand for calling into question their integrity and motivation, suggesting they are violating their core constitutional responsibility and undermining John Adams’s notion that we are a “government of law and not men.” Whether the form of activism strikes down constitutional acts of the other branches, ignores precedent, creates judicial legislation, departs from the accepted norms of interpretation, or is guided by results rather than process, judges are criticized for purportedly shirking their duty in favor of extrajudicial predilections (Kmiec, 2004). Yet, whether a decision falls into one of the categories is an act of interpretation and up for debate. Moreover, even if a decision is justifiably responsible for doing one of the aforementioned forms of activism, it is also debatable whether such a judgment was incorrect. *Brown v. Board of Education* is the most famous example of judicial activism, as it broke precedent and was guided by the consequences of a decision, but few look back on it as a bad decision. Instead, cases like *Brown v. Board of Education* draw on a narrative of righting an historic wrong.

Keenan Kmiec (2004) traces the meandering history of judicial activism since its original invocation by Schlesinger wherein it has been celebrated and decried, yet one thing remains constant: the ambiguity in its meaning and the ideological divide that underscores its use. “Ironically,” Kmiec argues,

as the term has become more commonplace, its meaning has become increasingly unclear. This is so because “judicial activism” is defined in a number of disparate, even contradictory ways; scholars and judges recognize this problem, yet persist in speaking about the concept without defining it. Thus, the problem continues unabated:

people talk past one another, using the same language to convey very different concepts. (p. 1443)

Judicial activism does not constitute a distinct act; rather, it functions as an *ideograph*, a rhetorical token wherein the rhetor simultaneously addresses the implied auditor and calls the audience into being. Michael Calvin McGee (1980) describes the ideograph as “an ordinary language term found in political discourse” with several distinct features such as its representation of collective commitment to a normative goal, justification for the use of power, and ability to guide behavior (p. 15). The most prominent ideographs in American culture are undoubtedly “liberty” and “equality,” which are culture bound and impact collective consciousness. McGee notes, “Each member of the community is socialized, conditioned, to the vocabulary of ideographs as a prerequisite for ‘belonging’ to the society” (p. 15). In other words, ideographs are vague yet immensely powerful concepts that a rhetor utilizes in order both to tap into and to direct the ideological commitments of the audience. Unlike liberty and equality, which signal democratic virtues, judicial activism is more akin to the evocations of communism and socialism as it “[guides] behavior and belief negatively by branding unacceptable behavior” (p. 15). In short, because of its stigma and connotations, mainstream political thinkers and commentators do not want to be associated with judicial activism. Instead, those defending a decision that may be viewed as activism will draw from a different discursive framework in order to justify it, such as the aforementioned narrative of righting a wrong.

Furthermore, the only way to understand such abstract concepts is to address how they are used (McGee, 1980). Due to its ambiguity and the increasingly partisan state of public discourse, both liberals and conservatives want to defend the decisions that support their ideological commitments and criticize the opposition of judicial activism. Such a strategy has been longstanding for conservative groups in response to the Warren Court and culminating in *Roe v. Wade*, whereas liberals have invoked the term more recently in response to *Bush v. Gore*, *Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission*, *Burwell v. Hobby Lobby Stores*, and others. Because of the increased attention to the judiciary in public argument, both liberals and

conservatives use judicial activism as an enthymematic signal and rally their constituents behind their cause.

## THE CONSERVATIVE CRITIQUE OF LIBERAL JUDICIAL ACTIVISM

For decades, conservatives have dominated the narrative surrounding judicial activism. FDR's threat to pack the court with sympathetic liberal justices followed by the impact of the Warren Court throughout the 1950s and 1960s instigated a keen conservative focus on the judiciary since at least the 1970s. GOP voters have long considered Supreme Court appointees a top priority on their agenda, and the results have paid off. Appointing 13 Supreme Court justices since 1969, Republicans have selected far more justices than their Democratic counterparts. If not for the ideological shift of justices like John Paul Stevens and David Souter, a conservative judiciary would have been much more pronounced. With the newest addition to the court, Brett Kavanaugh, conservatives have a lock on the court for a generation to come. One of the important political and jurisprudential reasons for the GOP's success has been their use of judicial activism as an enemy to the Constitution, democracy, checks and balances, and conservative (read: morally superior) values. Yet, since the judicial nominations have been more conservative given the predispositions of President Trump and the Republican Congress, judicial hearings were not the appropriate rhetorical moment to introduce charges of judicial activism. Instead, conferences, conventions, and campaigns featured more prominently, yet concerned standard talking points.

Two rhetorical themes merit attention: first, given the decades-old strategy of associating liberal decisions with judicial activism, conservatives portray their judicial philosophy as synonymous with judicial restraint. Conservative judges and justices are *de facto* restrained and are aligned with the correct model of judgment. Conservative rhetors continually reinforce this idea, creating in their audience a sense of authority and legitimacy. Second, conservative arguments criticizing liberal judicial activism and celebrating their own judicial restraint tend to be grounded in appeals to liberty, whether the liberty to own and carry firearms, the

liberty of religious conscience, the liberty of a fetus to fully realize its personhood, or the liberty of corporate speech; their “rights talk” is grounded in a conception of rule of law guided first and foremost by liberty. Just like judicial activism, however, their conception of liberty caters to their own ideological worldviews. Since liberty is at stake, their arguments are often imbued with the “paranoid style.” Echoing Barry Goldwater’s famous speech, they suggest that extremism in the face of liberty is no vice.

Concerning the first strategy, conservative politicians, pundits, and public intellectuals consistently return to the refrain that conservative judgment *is* judicial restraint. Doing so legitimizes conservative opinions and creates a sense of historical integrity. For example, Steven Aden, chief legal officer and general counsel for the Americans United for Life, addressed the reasons why Brett Kavanaugh (Figure 6.2) would be a model justice:

The second thing that made us high on him was his commitment to constitutionalism. When we look at a judge, we want to see a judge who is committed to what the terms of the nation’s charter were intended to mean and not impose his or her own value judgments on what those terms should mean. . . . The point is that *Roe v. Wade* is itself the best example of judicial activism that you can imagine. My colleague, Clark Forsyth, wrote in his book *Abusive*

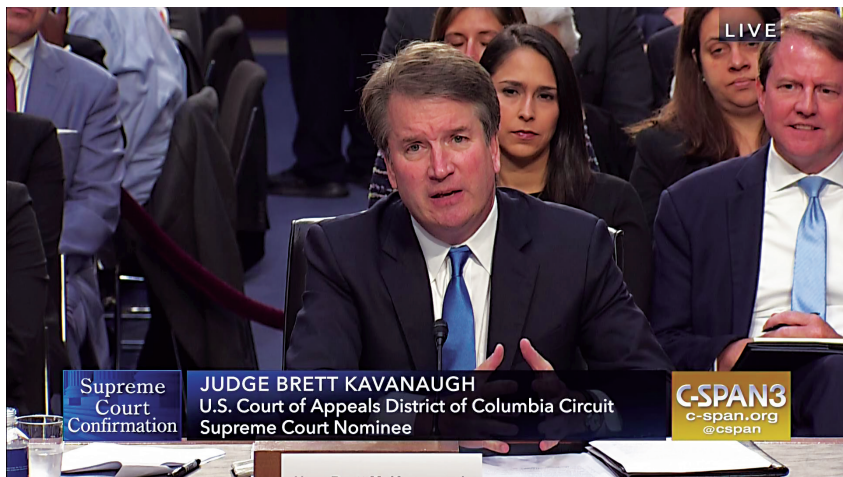


FIGURE 6.2 Justice Brett Kavanaugh confirmation hearing.

*Discretion* how what Justice White said in dissent was true: it was an exercise of raw judicial power. It was the majority in *Roe v. Wade* finding a right that hadn't been in the Constitution before and announcing it, imposing that on all 50 states. We think that kind of judicial activism is not only misguided, wrong for a nation's court, it's also passé. Today, people are looking for judges that really care about what the Constitution was intended to mean and not what the Supreme Court might have said that it meant many years later. (C-SPAN, 2018, July 31)

While reinforcing the importance of judicial restraint, Aden is simultaneously portraying liberal judgments as inherently misguided. By turning to the idea of what the Constitution “was intended to mean,” Aden tacitly evokes what Robert Bellah (1967) described as “American civil religion,” where the Constitution serves as a sacred text. Judicial activism, like that exhibited in *Roe v. Wade*, is a sacrilegious violation. Only conservative-minded judgment represents judicial restraint and embodies the *right way* of interpreting the law.

This idea is reinforced by various conservative rhetors. At the 2017 National Lawyers Convention, Attorney General Jeff Sessions claimed:

Appointing restrained judges has always been popular with the American people. It is deeply ingrained in their vision of what the role of a judge should be. . . . American people well know that activist judges effectively invalidate votes. Unprincipled ideologists want unelected judges to do for them that which they cannot win at the ballot box. This is not a partisan question; it's a question of fairness and fidelity to the judicial oath and adheres to the constitutional role assigned to the judicial branch and to the other branches. Judicial activism puts the prejudices and politics of the judge above the law. (C-SPAN, 2017, November 17)

Like Aden, there is no explicit reference to conservatism, but it is undeniably present. The “unprincipled ideologists” serves as an enthymeme, and the audience fills in the gaps. Sessions also distances himself from any partisanship because the terms are “fairness and fidelity” rather than



ideological motivation. Through the lens of Black (1970) and McGee (1980), Aden and Sessions are both creating an audience with particular dispositions concerning the judiciary and reinforcing the political myths they believe. Fairness and fidelity are easy to accept in the abstract, but there is significant disagreement about what that means when it comes to their application. By remaining abstract, they can avoid these more difficult issues and maintain the myth.

As the aforementioned AP Government Exam review highlights, the argument that judicial restraint is synonymous with conservative judgment has been so successful that it is accepted as common knowledge. Yet, with the growing conservative stronghold on the Court and the public criticisms that go along with being in power, simply decrying the acts of judicial activism are not enough, since they can be overturned. Even if the liberal justices do not have a majority position, their model of judgment is still a threat. Consider how Roy Moore used his Republican nomination acceptance speech as an opportunity to celebrate his dedication to the Constitution while simultaneously decrying his opposition:

The Constitution has been my life. I was sworn in many, many years ago on the banks of the Hudson River as a cadet in the Military Academy. I fought in a war to defend the Constitution. I fought in the courts against liberal judges who have usurped their authorities. (C-SPAN, 2017, September 26)

While Moore never outright calls out judicial activism, the idea that “liberal judges who have usurped their authorities” is all but saying that he fought against judicial activism. There is an implied call to fear as well, suggesting that if he (and, by extension, all conservative judges) had not been there, then the Constitution itself would be at risk. For Moore, it is not a single case that represents a moment of judicial activism; rather, liberal judges and their judicial philosophy embody activism.

Other conservative rhetors have taken a similar argumentative path. In a speech at the 2017 Conservative Political Action Conference, National Rifle Association Executive Vice President Wayne LaPierre claimed:

The left’s violence against America has taken many forms. For example, left-wing judicial activism can be a form of violence against



our constitutional system. Look at judicial efforts to block President Trump's executive order to take a longer look at people coming from countries that sponsor or harbor terrorists. Yet the protesters show up, the media amplify their anger, and the elites go into meltdown. It's not that the Constitution is unclear on this issue: the President handles foreign affairs of this country. It's an executive function and the U.S. laws on the issue couldn't be clearer. . . . Folks, when unelected, unaccountable judges can take that clear, unambiguous language and then twist it and pervert it to make it mean whatever they want, they might as well throw a Molotov cocktail at the U.S. Constitution. They do violence to the Constitution's separation of powers. They do violence to the U.S. Code and Supreme Court precedent. And they do violence to the checks and balances that keep government under control because making the law mean anything they want, they make the law mean nothing. (C-SPAN, 2017, February 24)

Much like Moore's appeal to fear, LaPierre's invocation of "violence" is meant to stoke mistrust and animosity, not only of a different judicial philosophy, but the left wing writ large. LaPierre is also trying to turn the tables on a regular criticism used against the National Rifle Association. Whereas firearms *may* be used for violence, they are merely tools to be used at the discretion of the legal owners. The liberal judicial activist agenda, however, is a manifestation of violence against democracy itself, threatening all the rights and privileges therein.

Whereas Moore and LaPierre focus more broadly on judges with liberal ideological predilections, others use the specter of judicial activism to call attention to particular liberal causes and decisions. Representative Steve King (R-IA) exhibits this well in a speech on the House floor on the most prominent issue conservatives use to criticize judicial activism: abortion.

I would take you back to 1973 and *Roe v. Wade* and *Doe v. Bolten*. Those two Supreme Court cases, working in conjunction with each other, essentially translated into abortion on demand. And we saw abortions go from who knows what the number was, no, we do know: about 35,000 abortions a year in America, a number of that I'd say, I thought was horrible then, to something like 1.6 million

abortions in America. Now ratcheted down by the weight of the conscience of our society to some number of a million or maybe a little less than a million. Mr. Speaker, we don't get to count that difference between 1.6 million, roughly the peak, and a little under a million, as 600,000 babies saved every year. Instead, it goes on our conscience the other way, and that's the cumulative total of 60 million babies who have been sacrificed at the altar of this subject called pro-choice, judicial activism. (C-SPAN, 2018, February 5)

King collapses prochoice, abortion, and judicial activism into one and charges it with the "sacrifice" of 60 million babies. Such a conflation is extreme, to be sure, but not for the audience he has in mind. By King's logic, without judicial activism there could have never been the decision in *Roe v. Wade*, and without *Roe v. Wade* there could have never been legalized abortion. King ignores some important facts in history, namely, that individual states were legalizing abortion in the years leading up to *Roe* and access to abortion was becoming increasingly easier.

All of these examples cultivate a looming sense of fear and portray their opposition as a dangerous, if not evil, force that requires vigilance to stop. Such appeals fall in line with Richard Hofstadter's (1965) analysis of the paranoid style. In his seminal essay "The Paranoid Style in American Politics," Richard Hofstadter argues that there is an inherent "feeling of persecution" and a belief in "grandiose theories of conspiracy" (p. 4). Hofstadter continues:

The paranoid is a militant leader. He does not see social conflict as something to be mediated and compromised, in the manner of the working politician. Since what is at stake is always a conflict between absolute good and absolute evil, the quality needed is not a willingness to compromise but the will to fight things out to a finish. Nothing but complete victory will do. (p. 31)

Enemies cannot be reasoned with, argues the paranoid, therefore they must be destroyed. The conservative lamentations against liberal decision like *Roe v. Wade* exhibit this all-or-nothing tendency. Moreover, there is a brilliant, sinister quality to their opposition. Hofstadter again:

This enemy is clearly delineated: he is a perfect model of malice, a kind of amoral superman: sinister, ubiquitous, powerful, cruel, sensual, luxury-loving. . . . He is a free, active demonic agent. He wills, indeed he manufactures, the mechanism of history himself, or deflects the normal course of history in an evil way. (pp. 31–32)

Karen Horney (1950) elaborates upon the paranoid position, focusing on the paranoid's insatiable need for perfection:

Under inner stress, however, a person may become alienated from his real self. He will then shift the major part of his energies to the task of molding himself, by a rigid system of inner dictates, into a being of absolute perfection. For nothing short of godlike perfection can fulfill is idealized image of himself and satisfy his pride in the exalted attributes which (so he feels) he has, could have, or should have. (p. 13)

The paranoid envisions a perfect life, individually and socially, and constantly strives to attain the unattainable. Horney goes on to claim “the idealized image becomes an *idealized self*. And this idealized self becomes more real to him than his real self” (p. 23). The paranoid seeks power, shows “an utter disregard for himself, for his best interests” (p. 29), distorts and fabricates information, and disregards evidence contrary to his paranoid perspective such that the idealized image of himself can be not only maintained, but strengthened as well. Certainly, the entirety of the conservative criticism of judicial activism does not go this far, but many of the most prominent appeals, including those used by Moore, LaPierre, and King, fall squarely into this category.

The Republican critiques reflect what Glendon (1991) describes as a “culture struggle,” which she characterizes as “a contest over the fundamental understandings of what kind of society we are, and the role of common moral intuitions in contributing to those understandings” (p. 110). Ignited most recently in the 1990s, the cultural divide between conservatives and liberals has only grown as political leaders and pundits stoked the flames. With the advent of social media and ubiquity of “fake news,” the possibility of finding common ground, especially on issues framed in legal and

moral terminology, seems increasingly fleeting. As a rhetorical token that orients the audience toward a particular mindset, Republican lamentations of judicial activism reinforce rather than repair the culture struggle.

## THE LIBERAL CRITIQUE OF CONSERVATIVE JUDICIAL ACTIVISM

For the sake of scope, I will limit my analysis of the liberal use of judicial activism to the last two Supreme Court nomination hearings as they are a primary site for arguments over judicial activism and were closely followed by the public. It goes without saying that the nominations have become increasingly polarized. Although the judiciary committee hearings serve an internal, procedural function in the Senate, they are also a lightning rod for public argument. Senators are not only vetting the nominee but also performing for the American public. The nomination of Robert Bork brought this in to clear view, and ever since nominees to the highest court have faced a gauntlet of judicial critique and public review. Since the last two nominees have been conservatives, liberals have used the hearings as a site to invoke their criticisms of judicial activism. When it comes to liberal critiques of conservative judicial activism, there tends to be three general categories: (1) case or issue, where the focus is on a single case/issue; (2) group solidarity, where the focus is on judges or justices standing together through multiple issues; and (3) jurisprudence, where the focus is on the legitimacy of originalism as a legal philosophy.

Regarding the first, the Gorsuch nomination provides a paradigmatic example. Gorsuch was critiqued for his judicial activism over the “frozen trucker” case he heard as an appellate judge. The case involved a truck driver, Maddin, who was delivering goods in the winter of 2009. When his vehicle froze up because of low temperatures, Maddin contacted the company, TransAm, who advised him to stay with the truck until repairs could be made. After waiting for hours, Maddin unhitched the cab and drove away without the trailer and the goods it was carrying. After the incident, Maddin was fired for deserting the trailer. After suing for unlawful termination, the lower courts agreed with Maddin and order him to be reinstated. The case was appealed to the Tenth Circuit where

Gorsuch sat on the three-judge panel. Maddin's case was again upheld, but Gorsuch dissented. Citing the "refusal to operate" clause in Maddin's contract, Gorsuch argued that the trucker had abdicated his legal responsibility and, consequently, nullified his contract with TransAm.

Drawing attention to this case, the general counsel for Communications Workers of America, Guerino Calemine, lamented the judicial philosophy of the future Supreme Court justice. Calling attention to Gorsuch's dissent in *TransAm Trucking v. Alphonse Maddin*, Calemine claimed,

Our concern about Judge Gorsuch ascending to the Supreme Court is about as fundamental as they can get. His jurisprudence is a threat to working people's health and safety. This hearing has already paid some attention to Judge Gorsuch's dissent in the *TransAm Trucking* case and that attention is justified. That dissent, issued seven months ago, reveals an antiworker bias and reveals a judicial activism that will ultimately put worker's lives at risk. (C-SPAN, 2018, June 28)

Calemine's criticisms underscore a recurring theme in Democratic campaigns: deference to corporate power has gone too far. Although this has been an issue throughout American history, there has always been an ebb and flow with regard to the public's attention. The 2008 economic crash, *Citizens United*, and *Hobby Lobby* returned focus to the scope of corporate power and the limits of governmental regulation.

The first category, case or issue-driven criticism, is perhaps the most prominent on the campaign trail, with both Democrats and Republicans using the judiciary to call a particular audience into being and reinforce a distinct ideological worldview, whether it is *TransAm* and *Citizens United* on the left, or *Roe v. Wade* and *Obergefell* on the right. The second category, however, examines the composition of the Court and warns of the danger of the tyranny of the majority. For Republicans, the Warren Court has long been the representative example of such a court run amok. In recent years, Democrats have used a similar strategy when characterizing the Roberts Court. During the Kavanaugh confirmation hearing, Senator Sheldon Whitehouse (D-RI) offers a broader critique along the

same lines and uses the idea of the “Roberts Five”—the five Republican Supreme Court appointees—as shorthand for a group utilizing their majority power to illegitimately impact otherwise healthy political process.

When does pattern prove bias? I wish this was an idle question. It’s relevant to the pattern of the Roberts court, when its Republican majority goes off on partisan excursions through the civil law. That is when all five Republican appointees—the Roberts Five, we can call them—go raiding off together and no Democratic appointee joins them. Does this happen often? The Roberts Five have gone off on almost 80 of these partisan excursions since Roberts became chief. That’s a lot of times. And there’s a feature to these 80 cases: they almost all implicate interests important to the big funders and influencers of the Republican Party. When the Republican justices go off on these five-justice partisan excursions, there is a big Republican corporate or partisan interest involved 92% of the time. The tiny handful of these cases that don’t implicate an interest in the big Republican interests is so flukishly few that we can set them aside. . . . Thus, the mad scramble of big Republican interest groups to protect a Roberts Five that will reliably give them wins. Really big wins, sometimes. I note that when the Roberts Five saddles up, these so-called conservatives are anything but judicially conservative. They readily overturn precedent, toss out statutes passed by wide bipartisan margins, and decide on broad constitutional issues that they need not reach. Modesty? Originalism? *Stare decisis*? All these supposedly conservative judicial principles all have the hoofprints of the Roberts Five all across their backs wherever those principles got in the way of those wins for the big Republican interests. (C-SPAN, 2018, September 4)

Rather than focusing on a particular case, Whitehouse paints a picture of a unified cabal set to dismantle healthy legislative policies and judicial precedent in favor of “big Republican interests.” Whitehouse goes on to illustrate the various issues that have been impacted: gerrymandering, voter suppression, campaign contributions, consumer protection, labor power, environmental protection, abortion and contraception, gun rights,

executive power, and others. Traditionally, judicial activism had been a talking point primarily utilized in Republican campaigns, but the rhetorical grounds are shifting in response to changes in the composition of the court and the decisions the court has made in the last 20 years. With the rise of a more conservative Supreme Court since the 1970s, paired with a more pronounced conservatism in the legislature, liberals are trying to use their lack of power to draw attention to the need for a united front both in the officials serving in office and the citizens with a liberal ideology in the public sphere.

Finally, the third category steps back even further and critiques the judicial philosophy of originalism and suggests it is at best a fool's errand when difficult cases are being decided, and at worst it is a flagrant hypocrisy that veils itself in neutrality when it is just as ideological as loose constructivism. Such a line of argument tends to be in line with the old adage that if you torture the text long enough, it will tell you what you want to hear. Senator Al Franken (D-MN) offers a strong example of this third type of criticism. During his questioning of Neil Gorsuch, Franken uses his time to condemn the judicial record of Justice Antonin Scalia, the intellectual force behind textual originalism, in order to criticize what he considered to be the hypocrisy of conservative jurisprudence:

During oral arguments for *Shelby County*, Justice Scalia seemed to suggest that it's the Court's job to step in when Congress's motives can't be trusted. Justice Scalia questioned the significant rise and support for the Voting Rights Act when Congress voted for reauthorization in 2006, which passed the Senate 98–0 and the House 390–33. Essentially, he said a senator would have nothing to gain by voting against reauthorizing the Voting Rights Act and that as a result, the Court should not read anything into the overwhelming support for the bill. Justice Scalia said, "It's a concern that this is not the kind of question you can leave to Congress." He went on to say, "Even the name of it is wonderful, the Voting Rights Act. Who is going to vote against that in the future?" When the solicitor general suggested that it would be unusual to analyze Congress's judgment in this way, Justice Scalia said, "I'm not talking about dismissing it, meaning Congress's judgment. I'm talking about looking at it to

see whether it makes any sense.” Now, this highlights two things that are pretty concerning to me. One, Justice Scalia’s cynicism about lawmakers’ motives, his remarks demonstrate a contempt for Congress that in my view also demonstrates a willingness to engage in the kind of judicial activism that many of my colleagues are quick to condemn. A willingness to “legislate from the bench.” Justice Scalia’s willingness to reach beyond the legislative history to question Congress’s political motivations disrespects the separation of powers. And two, Justice Scalia’s remarks ignored the facts when Congress voted to reauthorize the Voting Rights Act of 2006, it developed a significant legislative record. 15,000 pages of hearing testimony, documentary evidence and appendices, state records, and reports from outside experts that demonstrated continued need for the legislation. To suggest Congress’s support for the bill was based on anything other than substance ignores the reality that more members of Congress supported the Voting Rights Act because the legislation accomplished on an ongoing basis exactly what Congress designed the Voting Rights Act to accomplish. (C-SPAN, 2018, June 27)

Franken’s argument suggests a degree of rhetorical prestidigitation exhibited by Scalia (and, by extension, conservative judges operating under the auspices of textual originalism). On the one hand, Scalia argued that his model of adjudication followed closely the strictures of textual originalism, which he had expounded upon in judicial opinions, essays, books, and speeches throughout this life. The premise of his argument is enticing, as it frames the Court in a manner conducive to Madison’s argument that it is the “least dangerous branch.” Yet, with the other hand, Scalia dredges the annals of history in order to produce his desired conclusion. Arguably, *District of Columbia v. Heller* illustrates this point, as Justices Scalia and Stevens go tit for tat in documentary evidence supporting their opposing conclusions.

All three of these categories of criticism utilize the ideographic token of judicial activism so as to create and maintain the particular audiences to whom the rhetors are speaking. No doubt the audiences are aware of the idea of judicial activism, but they are turning the criticism once charged



against Democrats and liberals into a powerful talking point. Given the ascension of Gorsuch and Kavanaugh to the Supreme Court, the left wing will no doubt pay closer attention to the courts and use the idea of judicial activism as a way to rally their respective audiences.

Just as the Republicans reinforce a conservative ideological worldview with their use of judicial activism, so too do Democrats reinforce their liberal ideology. Whereas conservatives tend to rely on liberty as a guiding principle, liberals tend to rely on equality. And both believe their idea of judgment to be correct. As such, reconciliation appears impossible. However, following Glendon (1991), “Judicial adroitness at applying the constitutional principles of liberty and equality is rarely matched by a corresponding skill in implementing the congressionally endorsed principle of solidarity” (p. 115). Such solidarity is all but absent in federal politics, and attention is so often given to the moments that cause the greatest divide. Through their use of judicial activism, Democrats sought to constitute and reinforce a particular audience and predispose them toward viewing conservative jurisprudence as inherently biased and politically motivated.

## CONCLUSION

Whether one agrees with the conservative critiques of liberal judicial activism, the liberal critique of conservative judicial activism, or something in between, the debate over the idea is undergirded by an abdication of responsibility from political leaders. In her critique of public legal argument, Glendon (1991) stresses that the people, whether inert or immovable, are not the biggest challenge for political renewal. Rather, those in positions of political leadership bear a heavy responsibility for the caustic political environment because they model a polemical performance of political engagement that works to stifle productive democratic deliberation rather than attempting to create opportunities for discussion. If, following James Boyd White, our society is a culture of arguments and law is the most prominent site where this happens, then the current state of public legal argument is a testament to the great divide in our country. The disparate conceptions of judicial activism are a poignant symptom of a broader ideological problem wherein two completely different audiences,

two alien publics, are being created, addressed, and directed. The relationship between ideology, audience, and ideograph fuels group polarization, the vilification of opposition, and the performative umbrage taking that has become prominent in public controversies surrounding the judiciary. This analysis does not offer a way out; rather, I hope to call attention to the ways in which one particular concept—judicial activism—is used create, maintain, and direct two contrasting, competing audiences. Despite the same ideographic token, liberals and conservatives tend to follow separate, perhaps irreconcilable political myths. Only by being aware of these appeals do we have any hope of seeing through them. And with a new era of the Supreme Court underway, the judiciary will no doubt continue to play a prominent role in political rhetoric in the upcoming elections and beyond.

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## ***PART 3***

# ***C-SPAN in Critical Scholarship***

*Edited by Diana Zulli*

The utility of the C-SPAN Network goes far beyond airing congressional hearings and notable political events. As the upcoming chapters demonstrate, the C-SPAN Video Library is useful for scholars and journalists who are interested in the unedited and uninterrupted political coverage that only C-SPAN can provide. In particular, the chapters assembled for this book demonstrate the many methodological, theoretical, and topical orientations facilitated by the C-SPAN Video Library, such as responses during joint press conferences, issue framing, and online engagement. Below, I provide a summary of the Part 3 chapters, focusing on important takeaways and the unique ways C-SPAN has been used in critical scholarship. Building off this work, I offer future directions for research utilizing the C-SPAN Video Library.

### **POLITICIAN RESPONSES AND JOINT PRESS CONFERENCES**

In Chapter 7, Nicole Russell, Alexandra Johnson, and Patrick Stewart examine communicative interactions between President Trump and other foreign leaders during joint press conferences. The authors make clear that joint press conferences are unique communicative events, where the *type* of response given by world leaders might reveal more information than the actual content itself. In this case, the authors specifically examine the extent to which President Trump and other foreign leaders directly respond to journalist questions, offer intermediate replies where only part of the question is answered, or use equivocation language to evade answering the question altogether. To better understand these types

of replies and how they are used, the authors systematically and quantitatively analyze 12 joint press conferences between President Trump and other leaders from countries with free or partly free press ratings. Several interesting patterns emerge from this analysis. The results reveal that leaders across the world are most likely to use equivocation language and offer nonreplies during joint press conferences. Put another way, when asked a question by a member of the press corps, President Trump and his international counterparts typically do not answer the question posed to them but instead side-step the question by discussing other topics related to their personal and political agendas. The results also reveal that President Trump is more likely than other foreign leaders to offer intermediate replies, which suggests that when Trump is not evading questions altogether, he still only answers a portion of the questions asked by journalists. Overall, Russell, Johnson, and Stewart offer important insight into an understudied communicative event: joint press conferences. This research also provides future scholars and journalists with a unique analytical framework for evaluating joint press conferences.

## ISSUE FRAMING AND CLIMATE CHANGE

In Chapter 8, Heather Cann and Janel Jett call for a comparison of Donald Trump's climate change frames in televised speeches and Twitter discourse. Following key scholarship on framing effects (e.g., Chong & Druckman, 2007; Lecheler & de Vreese, 2011; Nelson, Clawson, & Oxley, 1997), the authors work from the perspective that issue framing can shape political reality, public opinion, and policy decisions. In the digital media environment, however, there are more opportunities for the political elite to disseminate information, which leads the authors to question if news platform or outlet affects issue frames. A qualitative content analysis confirms that this is indeed the case. The authors find that Trump emphasizes an "antiscience" or "science-denier" frame in his Twitter discourse, compared to the "policy" frame that emerges from his televised discourse. Results also reveal that Trump rarely ever frames climate change in terms of the "benefits," which is consistent with previous literature

of Trump's rhetorical style in general (see Cann & Raymond 2018). The authors argue that the dramatic difference in issue framing across news formats speaks to larger trends in the digital media environment. In particular, the authors conclude that issue framing is the result of multiple discursive moments and formations. Cann and Jett leave us wondering which types of discursive formations—Twitter discourse or more formal speeches—are echoed in the mainstream press. It is perhaps the case that social media discourse contributes more substantially to issue framing in the digital media environment.

### NONVERBAL CUES AND CONGRESSIONAL SPEECHES

In Chapter 9, Amber Williams Lusvardi and Terri Towner focus on the nonverbal cues elicited by congressional representatives and their effect on Twitter engagement. Nonverbal cues, such as smiling, hand gestures, and body movements, are an effective political strategy that can have a considerable impact on perceptions of and responses to political discourse (see Jakob, Roessing, & Petersen, 2011). Traditionally, nonverbal behavior has been studied in the context of presidential speeches. Lusvardi and Towner's research, instead, looks at the nonverbal behavior of congressional representatives to examine if and how these cues motivate engagement in the online space. Using clipped videos on C-SPAN's verified Twitter account, the authors find that nonverbal cues do not function similarly in the online space. In fact, the only predictor of likes, comments, and retweets on Twitter is controversial and/or ethical topics. That is, Twitter users are more likely to engage with C-SPAN Twitter content if the topic is controversial, rather than if the congressional speaker is dynamic and nonverbally engaging. The authors note that this null finding is perhaps more an indication of the limitations of Twitter than an indictment on the effects of nonverbal communication. It is perhaps the case that engagement on C-SPAN's Twitter feed is determined before users watch the clipped videos, and thus users may never encounter the nonverbal cues of congressional representatives. Lusvardi and Towner leave us wondering how interaction and engagement have changed in the digital media environment.

## RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

The research presented herein leaves us with many interesting and important questions about how the C-SPAN Video Library can further be used to better understand the modern political context. Russell, Johnson, and Stewart note that the topology of direct replies, intermediate replies, and nonreplies is a useful analytical framework for understanding joint press conferences. Currently, this framework only takes into consideration direct responses to journalist questions and does not consider the moments when leaders interrupt each other to make a comment or answer a question not directed toward them. In this case, what are the nature of these interruptions? Do political leaders directly respond, offer intermediate responses, or continue to use equivocation language? Is it possible another type of response emerges out of these interruptions? Additionally, because journalistic questions start these turn-taking interactions, how might initial questions or journalistic aggression affect the type of responses political leaders offer? Do ideological bias and network affiliation affect response type? Taking into consideration journalist affiliation, question tone, the risks and rewards for answering certain questions, and the current topology of replies, is there a way to anticipate how political elites will respond? Attention to these additional factors could be useful in developing a model for explaining and predicting politician responses during an array of communicative events. Such a model would be particularly instructive for scholars, journalists, political strategists, and politicians.

The effects of issue framing and elite discourse are well known. Framing in today's media environment is the result of many discursive moments cascading through levels of elite, mainstream media, and now social media discourse (see Entman, 2004). But which frames are echoed in "official discourse?" Issue frames are certainly produced and circulated in various formats (e.g., Tweets vs. presidential speeches), but which discourse formats are directly quoted by mainstream media? Because elite discourse contributes to the public's understanding of issues (see Druckman & Holmes, 2004; Page, Shapiro, & Dempsey, 1987), knowing which discursive formation gets the most attention in mainstream media warrants attention. Given Twitter's restricted character limit, it may be the case that Twitter discourse



is more “quotable” in the current media landscape. Also, if Twitter frames are more uncivil or aggressive, as found in Chapter 8, then we may see more tweets echoed in mainstream media compared to speech discourse because they offer greater opportunity for drama and controversy, and are thus more newsworthy. Cann and Jett’s discussion on climate change frames also raises questions about how media platforms affect the frames that emerge. Twitter—the way President Trump communicates on the platform—is primarily a written medium. Twitter also restricts discourse to 280 characters. Instead, content delivered by the C-SPAN Network is primarily visual and aural. Political speeches are less restricted by time, and thus it is common to hear more lengthy discussions of critical issues on the C-SPAN network. Undoubtedly, these platform and network differences affect how issues can be and are discussed. Will we ever see longer and more thorough policy frames emerge on Twitter? Do the formal conventions of political discourse in presidential and congressional speeches mitigate more “aggressive” issue framing? Because political discourse is increasingly disseminated on multiple platforms and networks, a platform studies approach to understanding issue framing is warranted.

Engagement and interactivity are inherent features of social media sites. C-SPAN has taken advantage of these tools and now features content on Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram. These clipped videos of congressional speeches offer social media users a digestible way to interact with more formal content. Because the results in Chapter 9 show no significant relationship between nonverbal cues and Twitter engagement, future research should once again consider the limitations of the platform. How are engagement decisions being made on specific social media sites? What content is needed to determine if a post deserves a like, retweet, or comment? Are users ever watching full C-SPAN videos on social media sites before they engage? How might the structure of Twitter encourage a certain type of engagement? Because text foregrounds the content of a video on Twitter, it is possible that engagement decisions are made at the level of discourse, not the visual images. Is engagement with C-SPAN content the same on Instagram? On Instagram, viewers encounter videos and images first and then have the opportunity to read the associated caption. Given that the video/text placement on these different social media platforms

varies, it is likely that engagement with content will also vary. Once again, a platform studies approach could help isolate and explain engagement with C-SPAN content on popular social media sites.

Collectively, the studies presented herein demonstrate the wide array of research that can be conducted using the C-SPAN Video Library. Future scholars might also consider how C-SPAN resources can facilitate their research that aims to understand the important and ever-changing nature of political communication.

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## CHAPTER 7

# TALKING HALF ANSWERS: EXAMINING PRESIDENT DONALD TRUMP'S JOINT PRESS CONFERENCE EQUIVOCATION DURING HIS FIRST YEAR

*Nichole A. Russell, Alexandra Johnson, and Patrick A. Stewart*

Throughout Donald Trump's presidency, it is clear the U.S. president does not enjoy dealing with news professionals. He frequently labels media coverage of his presidency as unfair and decries reputable news organizations such as CNN, *The Washington Post*, and *The New York Times* as "fake news" (Britzky, 2017). Instead of interacting with traditional media outlets directly, Trump frequently takes to Twitter to "correct" facts and give statements to the public about his policies and worldview. It is apparent that Trump does not trust the media to convey his messages as he would prefer, thus he attempts to usurp the media's control of his political narratives.

This may well be a strategic decision to avoid media scrutiny. When Trump does interact directly with the media, it tends to occur via one specific type of political communication event — joint press conferences — which

dominated his press interactions during his first year. In this time, Trump held only 1 solo press conference and 21 joint press conferences (Gerhard, 2018). In comparison, during their first years President Barack Obama held 11 solo and 16 joint, President George W. Bush held 5 solo and 14 joint, and President Bill Clinton held 12 solo and 26 joint press conferences (Gerhard, 2018). Also, considering he does not do one-on-one interviews with journalists frequently, these joint press conference appearances are the rare instances where journalists and the U.S. president interact directly.

To provide insight into Trump's behavior in joint press conferences, we use Bull and Mayer's (1993) typology of replies to consider his—in comparison with other national leaders (Table 7.1)—political discourse with journalists. This approach assesses political leaders' answers to journalist questions on the basis of three categories—replies, intermediate replies, and nonreplies. Bull and Mayer (1993) initially conducted content analysis of eight televised political interviews during the 1987 British general election between Margaret Thatcher and Neil Kinnock and found that while political leaders do have stylistic differences in rhetorical style, what they share is the use of equivocative language when responding to questions they would rather not answer (Bull & Mayer, 1993; Bull, 2008).

The focus of this study is on analyzing the types of responses President Trump gives, not in terms of substance, but in terms of style—simply put, does Donald Trump answer questions posed to him? Twelve joint press conferences from Trump's first year in office are analyzed (Table 7.2). This sets a baseline for his often-contentious relationship with the American and foreign media from the respective nations of the United Kingdom, Israel, Canada, Germany, Japan, Italy, Columbia, Romania, Poland, France, Lebanon, and Norway. In this chapter we first discuss the literature on joint press conferences and political equivocation, underscoring both the importance and establishing the analytic process we use. Next, we discuss how the data was collected and analyzed before we examine and explain

**TABLE 7.1** *President Trump's Speaking Time and Number of Responses Compared to All Foreign Leaders*

Country	Date	Political leader	Speaking time in seconds	Number of responses
United States	.	Donald Trump	3,531.78	48
Other countries	.	Foreign leaders	3,038.72	38

**TABLE 7.2** *Joint Press Conferences by Countries, Political Leader, Speaking Time, and Number of Responses for All Foreign Leaders*

Country	Date	Political leader	Speaking time in seconds	Number of responses
United Kingdom	1/27/17	Theresa May	124.16	4
Japan	2/10/17	Shinzō Abe	214.72	3
Canada	2/13/17	Justin Trudeau	229.56	3
Israel	2/15/17	Benjamin Netanyahu	524.40	4
Germany	3/17/17	Angela Merkel	204.48	3
Italy	4/20/17	Paolo Gentoloni	337.48	4
Colombia	5/18/17	Juan Manuel Santos	264.24	3
Romania	6/9/17	Klaus Iohannis	164.04	3
Poland	7/6/17	Andrzej Duda	270.60	3
France	7/13/17	Emmanuel Macron	489.44	3
Lebanon	7/25/17	Saad Hariri	98.04	3
Norway	1/10/18	Erna Solberg	117.56	2

the different response categories. We close by discussing the results and drawing conclusions.

## POLITICAL LEADER EQUIVOCATION DURING JOINT PRESS CONFERENCES

The study of presidential press conferences has been the subject of works in political communication, political psychology, and journalism scholarly research since the presidency of John F. Kennedy (Cornwell, 1965; Manheim, 1979; Press & VerBurg, 1988). JFK was the first president to participate in televising press conferences, essentially establishing the presidential press conference as an institution in U.S. politics (Clayman & Heritage, 2002; Kumar, 2003). For its part, the presidential joint press conference, which was first used by President George H. W. Bush, is an institution that political leaders use more as a venue for diplomatic discourse with a foreign leader than a serious setting for one-on-one interactions with journalists (Kumar, 2003; Manheim, 1979).

While disagreement exists regarding the substantive value of joint press conferences to either political leaders or journalists (Eshbaugh-Soha, 2012; Kumar, 2005), the optics of two heads of state meeting to take questions from an independent press benefits a political leader's agenda in multiple ways, even if the two leaders disagree. One, politicians gain credibility when they appear in front of press professionals; taking questions from the press makes them appear transparent and willing to work within the democratic system. Second, the most important narrative political leaders can espouse within the context of joint press conferences is one of shared interests, if not unity, between their countries; there are few better ways to assert the unity of nations than their leaders standing side-by-side and shaking hands. Third, while politicians must address the uncertainty regarding the content and tone of questioning from journalists, there is the countervailing benefit of sound bites and image bites (Grabe & Bucy, 2009) and the overall beneficial optics of having their remarks and image appear in news segments.

Journalists may seek to test this narrative of unity between political leaders via their questioning or may seek to only address pressing domestic issues. Certainly, journalists may choose to accept the narratives politicians promote during these press conferences. They may also develop a more aggressive line of questioning that departs from the politician's preferred theme while attempting to fashion their own narrative.

Press and VerBurg in their book *American Politicians and Journalists* say that press conferences have become "a game of hounds chasing a fox, of reporters trying to corner the president before a national audience" (1988, p. 199). While the press conference is a way of communicating with the public, the event can be more of a headache to political figures than help. There are, for political leaders, perhaps better ways of communicating with the public. Joint press conferences are highly structured but still leave the politician vulnerable to unknown questions by the press. Political officials are risk averse, and televised press conferences leave a politician vulnerable to news-hungry journalists (Press & VerBurg, 1988). Not only do journalists endeavor to shake loose precious information from political leaders regarding current events, but the way this information is presented by the political leaders may come at the expense of their messaging strategy and the persona they have constructed for the public.

Long-time news anchor Dan Rather, in his book *The Camera Never Blinks*, says presidents most often try to not answer questions posed by the press — Eisenhower used his “peculiar syntax,” Kennedy used humor, Johnson used biting critiques, and Nixon equivocated (Rather & Diehl, 2012, p. 292). Some critics say press conferences have become so contentious that the practice should stop altogether, because seldom does any actual news come out of the conference and little context is ever given to issues (Johnson-Cartee, 2005; Linksy, 1986). Instead, it provides a place for politicians to equivocate and journalists to grandstand. Larry Speakes, President Ronald Reagan’s press secretary, said the tradition of press conferences

in its present form is . . . East Room extravaganza . . . [and] a battle of wits . . . [where] too much of it boils down to: How can we get ‘em to say what they don’t want to say? Somehow, we need to get away from this “I gotcha” syndrome. (Johnson-Cartee, 2005, p. 200)

Even though politicians may feel at a disadvantage in their quest to maneuver the media, Press and VerBurg make the argument that politicians have the advantage in many ways. They control the information channels and many of the normative ways the press accesses their sources, which journalists need to write high-quality and reliable stories (1988). In essence, even though press conferences may appear to be a risky choice to reveal their message, ultimately, the politician is still the one in control.

## JOINT PRESS CONFERENCES AND THEIR PURPOSE

Joint press conferences are defined by several characteristics, specifically *turn-taking interactions*. In studying turn-taking interactions, it is important to understand how these exchanges normally take place. The turn-taking process in joint press conferences is highly constrained, putting pressure on journalists to ask the single best question that would help them achieve their information gathering needs. At the beginning of the press conference, both political leaders address the crowd and viewers with the domestic political leader speaking first, setting the host

country's agenda. Typically, the foreign leader then gives thanks for the host country's welcome, discusses what brought the leaders together, and then comments on the history and future relationship between the two nations. Occasionally, pleasantries are exchanged before the press conference portion of the event (Kumar, 2003).

Turns are taken when calling on journalists, with each political leader calling on journalists from their home countries (Kumar, 2003). During joint press conferences political leaders call on two journalists to ask a question of each political figure before waiting for their responses. Journalists remain seated until called on and usually do not call out questions at random to the political leaders. If a political leader seems to be struggling with which journalist to call on, journalists may raise their hands to signal to the political leader. Journalists only receive one questioning opportunity and are generally not given follow-up questions (Kumar, 2003).

Politicians use press conferences to promote their political stances and persuade the public (Eshbaugh-Soha, 2012; Kumar, 2010). To accomplish this they must rhetorically navigate questioning by journalists, which at times could threaten their public persona (Bull, 2008). In the television era, political leaders must also persuade an unseen, mediated audience that is not in the room, while at the same time navigating questioning from a press corps they cannot control. Regardless of the difficulties posed, televised press conferences are beneficial for public leaders because they are able to verbally deliver exactly the message they want to their audience without journalist mediation. However, because these relatively unmediated press conferences are digested and delivered by journalists to their readers and viewing audiences, political figures must remain vigilant concerning what they say and how they deliver their messages(s).

Joint press conferences differ from regular press conferences—in which a single political figure addresses a gaggle of reporters—by their potential to structurally limit journalistic aggression. As a result, political figures attempt to limit the prospective damage to themselves and their message in multiple ways. With joint press conferences, the norms of the event dictate a limited number of questions, roughly four, that the president and other national leaders must face. Additionally, due to the nature of alternating between answers, both politicians receive a respite in time and pressure while their political counterpart is responding. Furthermore, due to the



presence of foreign dignitaries, there is a norm of politeness that likely limits the aggressiveness of questioning (Russell, 2018). Specifically, the formal atmosphere with a guest makes it that much harder for journalists to employ the aggressive questioning techniques and follow-up queries typically used in regular press conferences (Banning & Billingsly, 2007). Thus, political leaders benefit from being seen as participating in the give-and-take of a press conference while seriously stunting journalistic aggression.

### POLITICAL LEADER EQUIVOCATION

Try as they might, political leaders do not define what will be the political news of the day. Politicians need journalists to communicate messages to the public; of course, even after taking their message public, political figures would rather the news directly promote their policies and not scrutinize and criticize them (Iyengar, 2015; Bull, 2008). To combat any negative exposure, political leaders want to control the stories involving them (Linksy, 1986) and attempt to accomplish this goal by managing the press (Press & VerBurg, 1988; Iyengar, 2015). Politicians do this by leaking specific pieces of information they want to the press, withholding information they are not ready to reveal, and holding press conferences in which they set as many of the terms as possible (Kumar, 2010; Sabato, 1991).

As we have discussed regarding joint press conferences, the context where politicians and journalists interact sets boundaries of acceptable behavior, and with it, message control. While political debates are arranged and controlled by the governing news organization and thus provide a relatively unmediated event, and the one-to-one political interview invites probing questions and follow-up inquisition, the structure of press conferences makes journalists abide by event norms. This typically leads them to cloak their questions in polite speech to nudge answers out of politicians (Eshbaugh-Soha, 2012; Kumar, 2010; Mannheim, 1979).

For their part, politicians equivocate when it serves their interests. Bull and Mayer's 1993 study of Margaret Thatcher and Neil Kinnock categorizes political leader responses into varying types of equivocation. *Political equivocation* is defined as a politician's hesitancy, inability, or unwillingness

to completely answer a question (Bull & Mayer, 1993). Politicians equivocate when they do not want to provide a complete answer to a journalist; they may do so through several different rhetorical approaches, although in general politicians will provide the answer they want to give as opposed to actually answering the question posed.

Despite this pioneering research, which occurred over a quarter-century ago, research into what factors lead journalists to ask follow-up questions is limited. More specifically, both cross-national and situation-specific research on political leader replies in joint press conferences provides the opportunity to explore not only an American leader but also leaders from multiple other countries. The study we carry out here provides perspective on Trump's political discourse in mediated communication events while considering his interactions with the press and in the presence of foreign political leaders during joint press conferences.

## A TYPOLOGY OF POLITICAL EQUIVOCATION

If questioning is an essential skill for journalists, politicians must be adept at responding to their queries. Political leaders must be skilled at self-presentation when facing any kind of confrontation that could affect their public persona (Bull, 2008), particularly when presenting their policies and issue positions (Bull, 2008; Iyengar, 2015). Broadcast press and politician interactions provide opportunities for politicians to speak directly to a mediated audience (Bull & Mayer, 1993; Heritage, 1985) with the possibility of convincing or influencing them. A mediated audience is made up of individuals who hear, view, or experience rhetorical or public events in a different manner or setting than it is presented from the speaker (Iyengar, 2015). Mediated political events provide a medium for politicians to explain their "motives, objectives, and policy positions, to justify their activities, and to affect the standards by which citizens evaluate political groups, policies, and issues" to a much larger audience than those who are in the room (Feldman, Kinoshita, & Bull, 2016).

In order to fully understand the different types of political equivocation, Bull and Mayer (1993) created a typology of answer types that

could be applied to political leader answers in interviews, debates, and press conferences. Here they conducted content analysis of eight televised political interviews during the 1987 British general election between Margaret Thatcher and Neil Kinnock by categorizing their answers into three categories—replies, intermediate replies, and nonreplies. The study showed that both politicians gave proportionately fewer replies than nonreplies throughout the interviews (Margaret Thatcher 56%; Neil Kinnock 59%). The dataset included eight different interviews where Thatcher and Kinnock each received 94 questions. Bull and Mayer also point out that while both politicians equivocated in response to questions from journalists, there were stylistic differences in their answers.

The findings of this study underscored the need for a spectrum of political leader responses to include intermediate replies, instead of the previous dichotomy between replies and nonreplies (Harris, 1991). Bull and Mayer's study found that while political leaders do have stylistic differences in rhetorical style, politicians use equivocative language when responding to questions they would rather not answer either due to aggressive questioning and self-preservation (Bull, 2008; Bull & Mayer, 1993). However, it is important to note the political equivocation typology does not assess truthfulness, instead estimating the completeness of a politician's answer based on the question posed by journalists. Before comparing different response types with questioning by journalists, a clear understanding of replies, intermediate replies, and nonreplies is needed. The following definitional explanations were used in the coding of this study, with examples taken from the joint press conferences between Donald Trump and other national leaders during the president's first year in office (Table 7.3).

## Replies

Contrary to popular belief, political leaders do give straightforward and complete replies, which is defined as a comprehensive and direct response to all aspects of a question posed by a journalist (Bull & Mayer, 1993). It is in a politician's best interest to answer questions as fully as possible (Bull, 2012), with equivocation in answering questions being costly for a political leaders' public persona (Bull, 2008; Clayman & Heritage, 2002).

TABLE 7.3 Examples of Replies, Intermediate Replies, and Nonreplies from Trump and Foreign Leaders

Speaker	Conference	Question	Answer	Answer type
President Trump	Canada	“President Trump, now that you’ve been in office and received intelligence briefings for nearly one month, <b>what do you see as the most important national security matters facing us?</b> ”	“Obviously, <b>North Korea</b> is a big, big problem, and we will deal with that very strongly. We have problems all over the Middle East. We have problems just about every corner of the globe, no matter where you look. I had a great meeting this weekend with Prime Minister Abe of Japan and got to know each other very, very well—extended weekend, really. We were with each other for long periods of time, and our staffs and representatives. But on the home front, we have to create <b>borders</b> . We have to let people that can love our country in, and I want to do that. We want to have a big, beautiful, open door, and we want people to come in and come in our country. But we cannot let the wrong people in, and I will not allow that to happen during this administration. And people—citizens of our country want that, and that’s their attitude, too.”	Reply
Prime Minister May	United Kingdom	“Prime Minister May, <b>do you foresee any changes in British attitudes towards sanctions on Russia?</b> ”	“We have, as far as the U.K. is concerned on sanctions for Russia in relation to their activities in the Ukraine, we have been very clear that we want to see the <b>Minsk Agreement fully implemented</b> . We believe the <b>sanctions should continue</b> until we see that Minsk Agreement fully implemented and we’ve been continuing to argue that inside the European Union.”	Reply
President Trump	Japan	“So against this backdrop, as was mentioned earlier, for the Trump administration, for the situations in Asia, <b>how would you respond to the increasing difficulty [in the controversy over the ownership of the South China Sea]?</b> ”	“I had a very, very good conversation, as most of you know, yesterday with the President of China. It was a very, very warm conversation. <b>I think we are on the process of getting along very well. And I think that will also be very much of a benefit to Japan.</b> So we had a very, very good talk last night and discussed a lot of subjects. It was a long talk. And we are working on that as we speak. We have conversations with various representatives of China, I believe, that that will all work out very well for everybody—China, Japan, the United States, and everybody in the region.”	Intermediate reply

As far as the currency devaluations, I've been complaining about that for a long time. And I believe that we will all eventually—and probably very much sooner than a lot of people understand or think—we will be all at a level playing field, because that's the only way it's fair. That's the only way that you can fairly compete in trade and other things. And we will be on that field, and we will all be working very hard to do great for our country. But it has to be fair.”

Prime Minister Gentolini	Italy	<p>“Mr. Prime Minister, I want to get your thoughts on a referendum in Turkey that occurred last week . . . <b>are you concerned with the result of the Turkish referendum?</b> And is that something that you discussed with President Trump?”</p>	<p><b>“The Turkish referendum is a fact that we must take note of, leaving aside any debates that can take place about how the vote took place.</b> But I believe that the European leadership have taken note of the vote. The consequences will depend a great deal on how the Turkish Government and President Erdogan, especially, will take into account almost half of the population's expression of a different opinion. <b>Will there be an inclusive approach, or will there be a confrontation in this part of Turkey? This will be very important for us and the European Union.</b>”</p>	Intermediate reply
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*Continued*

TABLE 7.3 (Continued)

Speaker	Conference	Question	Answer	Answer type
President Trump	Lebanon	“Mr. President, how can the United States help Lebanon cope with the massive number of refugees—of Syrian refugees? And is there a way you can help facilitate the refugees’ return to their home country?”	“Well, we are helping. And one of the things that we have made tremendous strides at is getting rid of ISIS. We have generals that don’t like to talk; they like to do. And we were with General Mattis last night, and the success they’ve had against ISIS is extraordinary. We’ve made more progress in the last four or five months than previous—really, I could say, the previous administration made in eight years. And then we have to see what we have to see. But I will tell you, ISIS in Syria, ISIS in Iraq, ISIS in other locations—we have made tremendous strides. Our military is an incredible fighting force. And as you know, I let the commanders on the ground do what they had to do. Before, they used to have to call in this beautiful house and speak to people that didn’t know what was happening—where they were, what locations—practically, probably never heard of the countries they were talking about, or the towns. I let the generals do what they had to do. And we have made tremendous plans. We were discussing it just before. We have made tremendous gains with respect to ISIS in Syria, Iraq, and other places. Thank you.”	Nonreply
Prime Minister Solberg	Norway	“President Trump has said that the investigation into Russian collusion makes our country ‘look very bad’ . . . that ‘the world is laughing at our stupidity.’ So my question to you is, <b>Are you laughing at the Russian investigation?</b> ”	“ <b>I think that it’s up to every political system and countries to scrutinize and discuss their own political agenda in their countries.</b> And I respect that very much and that this is an issue for American politics. I would just like to say that it has impacted also in Europe. I think all European countries who have had elections this year has been looking into will there be any type of tampering of others. We concluded our own election and we could not find any proof of any had tried to put any emphasis on that from countries outside Norway. I think it was a very Norwegian election with Norwegian participants.”	Nonreply

Complete replies not only reinforce the political leader's credibility but also help eliminate any contention with journalists (Clayman & Heritage, 2002). In other words, by giving a complete reply, a political leader appears to be compliant with press overtures while appearing to honestly answer for the audience following the event unmediated or through television, Internet, or alternative forms of news coverage. Replies do not mean a political leader is being truthful; the politician could reply to a posed question with an untruth or purposeful misdirection. Due to joint press conferences norms, it would be difficult for a journalist to challenge a political leader who completely replied to a posed question with an untruth.

### Intermediate Replies

At times, political leaders respond to one portion of a journalist's question but do not reply to the entirety of the question. This results in intermediate replies, also referred to by Harris (1991) as indirect replies, which "can be placed midway on a scale of evasiveness between direct answers and outright evasion" (Bull, 2003, p. 110). Intermediate replies show hesitancy by the political leader to answer a certain part of the query. Characteristically, this type of reply enables the political leader to direct attention to a particular point or statement they want to make. By partially answering the question, a political leader's intermediate reply might satisfy a journalist enough for them to not challenge the answer. The politician still risks the journalist taking initiative in following up with a clarification question in retaliation to the incomplete response.<sup>1</sup>

Intermediate replies are broken down into three superordinate categories: incomplete answers, implication answers, and interrupted answers. An *incomplete answer* occurs when a political leader only responds completely to one part of a question posed while ignoring the rest of the query (Bull & Mayer, 1993). Whether to a single question or question cascade (a question technique where a journalist follows one question with several others in succession), this answer type shows initiative on the politician's part to answer specific parts of a question. While a politician could be answering the part of the question they remember if multiple questions are

posed in a turn (Clayman & Heritage, 2002), typically incomplete answers indicate hesitancy in their response (Bull & Mayer, 1993).

For their part, *implication answers* occur when a politician implies or suggests an answer to what a journalist is asking but does not explicitly give an opinion or answer the question (Bull & Mayer, 1993). In many ways, this type of response does provide a reply to a journalist's query albeit not as direct, because the journalist and the overhearing audience must infer what the politician believes.

Finally, at times a journalist will interrupt a political leader before they finish responding to a question. These *interrupted answers* typically occur in one-on-one broadcast interviews and political debates where journalists have greater power to control the flow of talking turns (Bull & Mayer, 1993) and would not be an expected approach from journalists in the highly structured environment of joint press conferences.

### Nonreplies

Nonreplies occur when a political leader decides a question posed by a journalist leaves no positive outcome, and they instead choose to equivocate rather than give a complete answer (Bavelas, Black, Chovil, & Mullet, 1990). These nonreplies do not answer the intended question, instead refocusing the subject of the question on a topic the politician wants to answer (Bull, 1994; Bull & Mayer, 1993). Whether specific politicians tend to be inherently evasive or the political situations faced by them require them to be evasive (Bavelas, Black, Bryson, & Mullett, 1988; Bavelas et al., 1990), instances of nonreplies provide a means for politicians to respond to questions but also avoid uncomfortable or impolite answers they are unable or unwilling to give.

Nonreplies show the greatest hesitancy by politicians to answer a given question and create an atmosphere of contention between the politicians and journalists. While nonreplies may benefit the politician immediately, they might create a contentious relationship with journalists who expect complete answers to their questions (Bull & Mayer, 1993). Unlike intermediate replies, nonreplies from politicians do not meet the needs of the journalist; if used, political leaders risk follow-up and future aggressive questioning from journalists.



## STATISTICALLY ANALYZING REPLY TYPES

To constrain our analysis of President Trump's joint press conferences during his first year, we chose only countries with free or partly free press ratings based upon Freedom House's Freedom of the Press index (2017) comparing complete replies, intermediate replies, and nonreplies to six free and six partly free foreign and domestic press corps and their respective political leaders. Data analysis for this study was carried out in multiple steps using conversation analysis. *Conversation analysis* looks to understand specific dimensions of interactional and "turn-at-talk" dialogue going on between two or more individuals (Atkinson, 1984; Masters & Sullivan, 1989). First, C-SPAN videos of joint press conferences were downloaded and analyzed through transcripts via an established codebook and video coding software, ANVIL. Transcripts for each joint press conference were gathered from the C-SPAN database and cross-referenced with transcripts provided on [whitehouse.gov](http://whitehouse.gov). Second, the unit of analysis—political leader response (whether complete reply, intermediate reply, or nonreply) during each joint press conference was coded using the typology and codebook of reply types from Bull and Mayer (Bull & Mayer, 1993). Intercoder reliability on the qualitative aspects of this framework was assessed and is discussed in the chapter appendix.<sup>2</sup>

## FINDINGS

Analysis of the 86 responses by Donald Trump and the assortment of world leaders he met during his first year in office suggests that Trump was responsible for answering over 10% more questions than the leaders from the other nations (55.8% vs. 44.2%). However, when time per response is considered, Trump spent less time during each speaking turn (73 vs. 80 seconds) when compared to the other world leaders, although the difference is not statistically significant ( $t [84] = .672, p = ns$ ).

The slight difference in time spent on each response is offset, however, by Trump's verbal fluency. The average number of words spoken per minute by Trump was significantly higher than that of the other world leaders,  $t (84) = 2.970, p = .004$ . At nearly 170 words per minute ( $M = 167.15$ ,

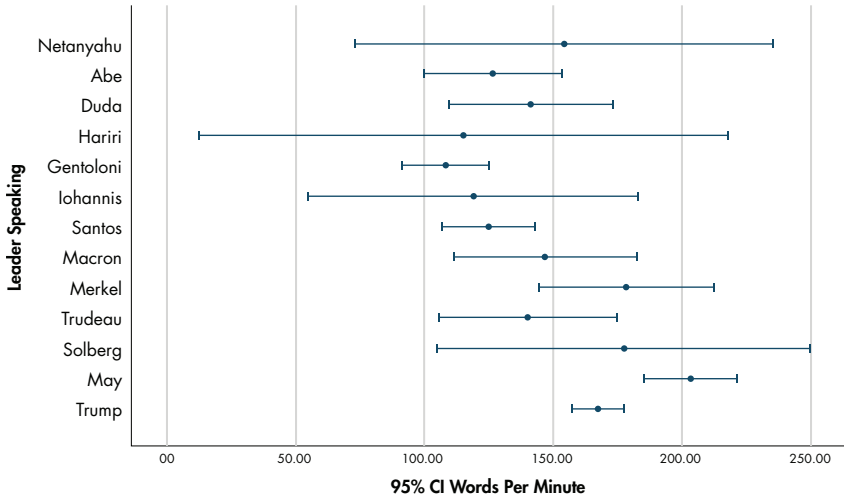


FIGURE 7.1 Word count and speaking time by political leader.

$SD = 34.99$ ), Trump said nearly 25 words more per minute than that enunciated by the other world leaders ( $M = 144.41$ ,  $SD = 35.63$ ). As can be seen in Figure 7.1, Trump spoke more words per minute than Gentoloni and Santos, yet fewer words per minute than May. As can be expected, this might be due to the former speakers not having English as their native language.

This difference might also be due in part to the comparatively unsophisticated means by which we consider speech rate, with word count not necessarily capturing verbal aptitude. Specifically, individuals using a larger vocabulary of multisyllabic words would appear relatively disfluent in comparison with those using a less complex, yet more verbose approach to speaking.

Consideration of the answer type shows that of the three response types considered, nonreplies made up the majority of responses (52.3%) for all political leaders; there was a near even split between replies (24.4%) and intermediate replies (23.3%) for all the leaders. Comparisons of Trump to the other political leaders during these joint press conferences shows a statistically significant difference ( $\chi^2 [2] = 6.191$ ,  $p = .045$ ) with a medium-sized effect ( $\phi = .268$ ). As can be seen in Figure 7.2, Trump provides proportionately fewer replies, substantially more intermediate replies, and fewer nonreplies than the other world leaders.

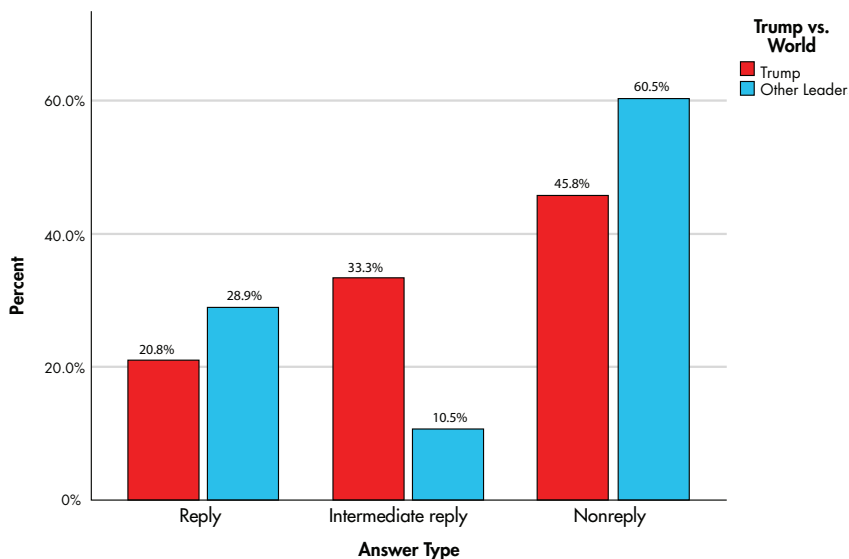


FIGURE 7.2 Percentage of answer type by political leader.

When the source of the question is considered, whether journalists from the United States or from the nation represented by the other national leader, we see a significant albeit weak relationship with type of equivocation in reply ( $\chi^2 [2, 86] = 4.673, p = .097, \phi = .332$ ). Further probing suggests Trump is the driving force ( $\chi^2 [2, 48] = 5.303, p = .071, \phi = .332$ ) when compared with all other political leaders ( $\chi^2 [2] = 1.307, p = .520, \phi = .185$ ). Analysis of Figure 7.3 suggests that Donald Trump is equally likely to give a nonreply to a journalist from other nations as he is to an American journalist; however, where he differs is in proffering more replies to U.S. journalists and more intermediate replies than expected to foreign journalists.

While the distribution and number of intermediate replies preclude statistical analysis, comparisons of patterns in response are illustrative. Both Trump and foreign leaders rely on implication answers a quarter of the time. While foreign leaders' incomplete answers comprise the remainder of their intermediate reply types, for Trump they comprise the majority (56.3%) of answers, or if considering them as part of his rhetorical strategy with the final category that combines incomplete and implication answers, three-quarters of his intermediate replies.

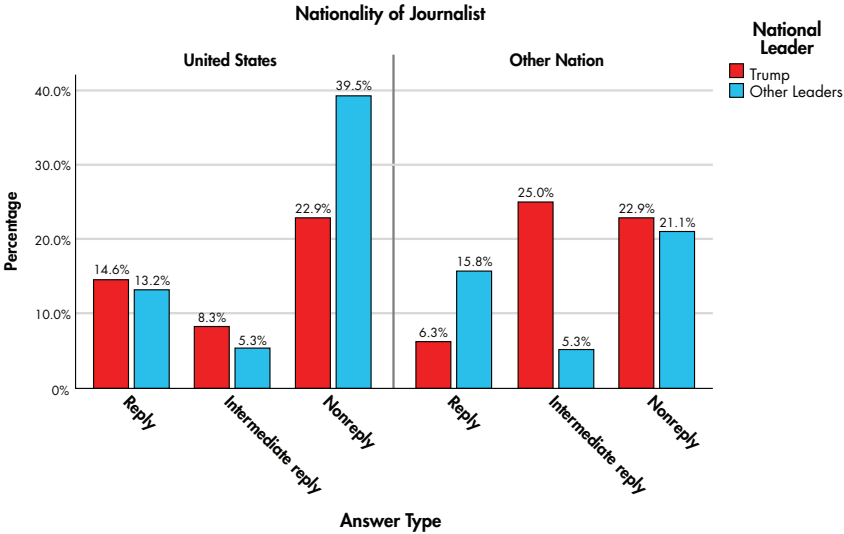


FIGURE 7.3 Percentage of political leader answer type by nationality of journalist.

When nonreplies are analyzed in greater detail, we find that President Trump and foreign leaders differ substantially. The modal category of nonreply by foreign leaders was acknowledging the question ( $N = 8$ ), followed by ignoring the question ( $N = 3$ ), and either declining to answer due to unwillingness ( $N = 2$ ) or acknowledging then ignoring the question ( $N = 2$ ), with the remaining eight nonreplies being of different types. For Trump, no one particular approach predominated, with only him acknowledging the question then talking up his side to make a political point occurring multiple times ( $N = 3$ ). Throughout the remaining 19 nonreplies, he used 19 different types.

## DISCUSSION

Clearly, President Trump is selective when it comes to how he interacts with the press. Though it was not possible to pinpoint every journalist and their affiliation for this study,<sup>3</sup> Trump has preferred journalists who are called on frequently in his press conferences—John Roberts of FOX News, Blake Berman of FOX Business Network, and Jonathan Karl of ABC News. All three of these reporters were called on multiple times

in these press conferences — Berman and Karl twice each and Roberts three times. While Trump goes back to his preferred reporters regularly in the U.S. press, he has even called on a foreign journalist in his press conference with French Prime Minister Emmanuel Macron. Calling on the foreign journalist, who identified himself as being from “Phoenix TV of China,” breaks the norm of politicians calling on their own press corps during these conferences.

Considering this behavior, it is not surprising that Trump is equally as choosy when answering questions posed to him by journalists. With a proportionately greater amount of his answers being intermediate replies, questions may be raised regarding his strategic intent toward the press and if a strategy exists. With President Trump being the personification of the nontraditional politician, and apparently not solely focused on staying on message, the reasons may range from strategic misdirection to coached intellectual disinterest. Regardless, one could speculate as to why intermediate replies are more advantageous for a politician rather than a nonreply more generally. When posed with several questions at once, as is the norm in joint press conferences (Clayman & Heritage, 2002; Russell, 2018), a politician could pick out the most favorable portion of the question, ignoring the other parts, and be perceived as giving an actual reply to a journalist's question. While this tactic could cost them legitimacy during press conferences, which later lingers on in the public sphere, they are satisfying the journalist in some respects by giving them more than a distinct and identifiable nonreply.

Additionally, the use of an implication reply allows the politician a sort of freedom to answer a question in such a way as to satisfy the question asked of them but not tread too deeply into the affirmation of an answer that could be held against them later. An intermediate reply could be the perfect response to journalistic questioning in joint press conferences, and combined with Trump's use of ridicule in his rhetoric, he could be better at the art of the politician response than first expected (Eubanks, Stewart, & Dye, 2018).

While Trump's preferred answer type, nonreplies, are especially difficult for journalists to deal with in press conferences, his increased use of intermediate replies is not easy to follow up on for reporters either, because of not only the substance but also the prescribed norms of joint

press conferences. Considering his lack of experience in politics, this tactic shows Trump's communication skills are surprisingly savvy in responding to journalists by using response types that give journalist an answer to his preferred question. His reliance on intermediate "half" answers combined with his use of jokes and answering questions out of turn allows President Trump to take full control of the press conference, using his brash rhetoric and behavior to his advantage.

## CONCLUSIONS

There is no doubt that representative democracies thrive when their leaders come under the scrutiny of a watchful and incisive press; this is accentuated in our mediated era where both journalists and political leaders are intrinsic parts of political stories. Increasingly, political leaders—even in those nations with a free or mostly free press—recognize the effect of such light being shed upon their political machinations. Thus, they work to delineate and delimit the influence of the press through various means, including the structural impediments as seen in the joint press conferences and relied upon by President Trump. Here, the presence of another national leader makes President Trump appear more statesmanlike (Grabe & Bucy, 2009) beyond that their joint attendance in a presumed diplomatic endeavor blunts the journalistic aggression that may be employed (Russell, 2018), while making it appear that a free and open press is operative.

Most interesting in these press and political leader interactions is when turn-taking norms are broken and heated communication is exchanged. During his press conference with Chancellor Angela Merkel of Germany (Figure 7.4), Trump is asked the following question from Kristina Dunz of the German News Agency:

And then, Mr. President, America First—don't you think that this is going to weaken also the European Union? And why are you so scared of diversity? In the news and in the media, you speak so awful of fake news and that things, also, cannot be proven. For example, the fact that you have been wiretapped by Mr. Obama.



FIGURE 7.4 Trump joint news conference with Chancellor Merkel.

In response, Trump provides a seemingly sarcastic comment about the reporter and corrects her assertions:

Nice, friendly reporter. First of all, I don't believe in an isolationist policy, but I also believe a policy of trade should be a fair policy. And the United States has been treated very, very unfairly by many countries over the years. And that's going to stop.

But I'm not an isolationist. I'm a free trader, but I'm also a fair trader. And free trade has led to a lot of bad things happening—you look at the deficits that we have and you look at all of the accumulation of debt. We're a very powerful company—country. We're a very strong, very strong country. We'll soon be at a level that we perhaps have never been before. Our military is going to be strengthened—it's been depleted.

But I am a trader. I am a fair trader. I am a trader that wants to see good for everybody, worldwide. But I am not an isolationist by any stretch of the imagination. So I don't know what newspaper you're reading, but I guess that would be another example of, as you say, fake news.

This response from Trump is not a reply or even an intermediate reply; instead, Trump spends the majority of his nonreply (according to the

typology) attacking the interviewer, attacking the question for factual inaccuracies, and largely ignoring the questions posed by Dunz. While it might be easy to cast blame on Trump for not answering this question, it could be said that Dunz's question was aggressive toward the U.S. president. If a question is overtly aggressive, there is reason to think that a politician would not want to respond with a full reply. Here, not only would it not be helpful for Trump's public image to answer a question like, "And why are you so scared of diversity?" but the journalist's approach in questioning him is less conversational and more accusatory; even if the questions posed by Dunz were important, the way she asked the questions did not incentivize Trump to give her an answer related to her question.

While understanding Trump's typical answer style in press conferences is helpful in studying his presidential rhetoric, there are several factors at play in joint press conferences not yet considered in this study. First, the current study does not consider journalistic aggression. According to Banning and Billingsley (2007), journalists are less likely to ask aggressive questions of politicians in joint press conferences than solo press conferences because of the norms of the event. This finding does not mean that instances of aggressive questioning do not exist and moving forward should not be considered. An initial sampling of Trump's joint press conferences found that journalists use aggressive techniques to question the U.S. president (Russell, 2018). Combining the question techniques journalists use and the types of answers politicians give to those questions could be revealing of the turn-taking behavior in joint press conferences.

Second, not much is known about how much often Trump breaks the norms of press conferences himself. Again, the person in power during these press conferences is the politician. While the journalists show up to joint press conferences hoping to get answers to their questions, they ultimately must take what they can get from the politician. Many times in these press conferences, President Trump answers out of turn — often answering a question posed to the other political leader and interrupting whoever is speaking to take back control of the turn. A deeper understanding of when these turns are usurped and what the circumstances surrounding those breaks are in turn is needed moving forward.

Practically, the use of Bull and Mayer's typology to apprehend how a politician answers a question or dodges it is useful for both journalists and



political scientists. Journalists could use this technique in action during press conferences to question politicians more effectively by recognizing and anticipating political figures' equivocation strategies. The journalists can thus construct either better and more incisive questions or be prepared to break with norms of politeness when this approach is used. Political scientists and those focusing on the strategic attributes of politics can use this typology and methodology to analyze foreign policy communication and, in conjunction with other types of analysis, consider the dynamics of press-political interaction with implications for international policy and predicting potential actions by political leaders.

Philosophically, citizens of a free society have the right to know, not only what their public officials are saying, but also what they mean when they say it. The public deserves to know whether a politician answers a question posed to them, and most definitely deserve to know how they answered that question. Particularly in a democratic republic, and above all in this time of polarized politics with dramatic coverage fueling acrimony, the citizens of the United States should at the very least have direct access to what politicians said and how they said it. This, fortunately, is provided by C-SPAN's coverage and archives. Furthermore, providing journalists and interested citizens the tools to better deconstruct and apprehend what was said can only serve to strengthen a political system that relies upon popular assent. Even if a politician does not mean what they say, lies, or retracts their statement before the 5-o'clock news, citizens in a free society should be aware when a question is left unanswered, whether incompletely or totally. This is especially true for the highest office of the United States, and perhaps the most powerful executive on the planet: while presidential words might be freighted with political equivocation, when the executive office speaks, the people it serves should be aware of what is being said.

APPENDIX: TYPOLOGY OF NONREPLIES

Category	Superordinate category	Subcategory	Description
Intermediate reply	Incomplete reply		Answers the question asked
		Partial	Makes comment about aspect of single questions
		Fractional	Makes comment about one part of multi-part questions
		Half	Makes comment about only one part of question with two parts
	Implication reply		Responds without explicitly stating their own opinion, but implies answer
Nonreply	Interrupted reply		Cannot finish response because interrupted by interviewer
	Ignores the question		Does not acknowledge or answer the question
	Acknowledges the question		Acknowledges the question asked but continues with another point
	Questions the question	Request for clarification	Answer seeks further information before answering
		Reflects the question back	Answer turns the question around on the interviewer
	Attacks the question	Fails to tackle the issue	Answer does not address the main issue of the question
		Questions is hypothetical/speculative	Answers with a theoretical or abstract answer
		Question is based on a false premise	Answer states the question is based on a false premise
	Question includes a misquotation	Question is factually inaccurate	Answer states a fact in the question is inaccurate
		Questions was taken out of context	Answer states the quotation was misquoted
		Questions was taken out of context	Answer states the quotation used was taken out of context
	Question is objectionable		Answer states the question is unacceptable or offensive
	False alternative		Political leader refuses to answer the question because of the false alternatives posed from the question

Nonreply	Attacks the interviewer	Specifically attacks the interviewer as opposed to the question
	Declines to answer	Inability
		Cannot answer the question because they either do not know or do not currently have the ability to answer with certain facts/opinions
		Will not answer the question posed
	Unwillingness	Attacks others and/or their affiliations
	External attack	Gives policy points
Makes political point	Presents policy	Rationalizes the policy as opposed to answering the question
	Justifies policy	Answers with assurance of own skills or positivity of affiliations
	Gives reassurance	Answer tries to bridge some difficulty with a call to nationalism and/or feelings of patriotism
	Appeals to nationalism	Answers with analysis of political situation or policy
	Offers political analysis	Rationalizes/vindicates own actions or opinions
	Self-justification	Uses boastful/affirmative language about self or affiliations
	Talks up one's own side	Takes answer from a previous question in the interview and repeats themselves
Repeats the answer to a previous question		
States or implies the question has already been answered		States or implies that the particular question has already been answered
Apologizes		Apologizes for something in question but neither confirms nor denies question context

Source: Bull, P., and Mayer, K. (1993, December). How not to answer questions in political interviews. *International Society of Political Psychology*, 14(4), 651–666.

## NOTES

1. In Bull and Mayer's 1993 study, Thatcher and Kinnock only responded to journalists' questions with intermediate replies 6% and 1%, respectively, making it the answer type used the least by both politicians. Bull and Mayer posited this observation could have resulted because of the great hesitancy in answering the types of questions posed by the interviews or because during broadcast interviews a journalist controls the setting and has more power when controlling the turns-at-talk. With the journalist in control of the conversation, they are freely able to ask questions and follow-up without breaking norms of the political communication interaction.

2. Intercoder Reliability: Analysis of thematic content categories is highly interpretive (Krippendorff, 1980), and while analysis of question structure and design is more concrete, intercoder reliability is used to validate the results of this coding approach. Nichole Russell, first author; Alexandra Johnson, second author; and two paid coders, Molly Matney and Lisa Darden, coded for this research project. Johnson was secondary coder on Russell's study (2018) and had previous experience with the codebook. Matney and Darden were given training materials and coded a press conference between President Trump and President Putin. After the initial training, press conference assignments were given. After initial analysis, agreement was assessed, and mediation sessions were used in the case of definition disagreement in the codebook or coding correction between the coders.

The two mediation sessions covered five press conferences in the first session and the remaining seven in the following session. Secondary coding was conducted on the entire dataset. Each press conference was coded by three coders; conferences assignments were picked at random, with the only exception being that Russell coded all press conferences. Before coding, a minimum of 70% agreement was decided upon for each press conference. The lowest level of agreement found in mediation was 72%, and the highest level of agreement at 91%. Median agreement for all press conferences 80.63%.

3. A complete listing of journalists and their affiliations is missing from this analysis due to the structure of joint press conferences. While a journalist may sometimes state their name and affiliation, they are not required to. A politician may also call on a journalist by name, but often times the political leader points to a journalist to indicate a turn. This norm makes it very difficult to know which journalist is asking a question.

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## CHAPTER 8

# IGNORE THE HOAXSTERS AND UNLEASH AMERICAN ENERGY: PRESIDENT TRUMP'S RHETORIC ON CLIMATE CHANGE

*Heather W. Cann and Janel Jett*

### INTRODUCTION

Public perceptions of President Trump, as both an individual and politician, are invariably shaped by his virtual presence on the popular social media platform Twitter. An active user for years prior to his formal participation in American politics, Trump reliably uses Twitter to share his oftentimes idiosyncratic views on numerous issues.

One such idiosyncratic view is the president's statements on anthropogenic climate change—broadcasted to the world through Twitter since 2011, as well as shared in a range of more formal video recordings. In a 2018 Associated Press interview, for example, the president stressed his skepticism concerning the human-caused nature of climate change, as well as the motivations for those who push for climate-energy policy.

The president's persistence at disseminating contentious statements highlights important emerging questions on the lines between formal and

informal discourse, especially when these contentious statements are in such stark contrast with the expert consensus around important current issues. Recent scholarship suggests that this type of communication can shape not just the public and the media but also elite discourse and the discussion of policy solutions more broadly.

Indeed, environmental politics and communications scholars have long been interested in how elites shape public discourse around contentious policy problems, such as climate change. Researchers have found that controlling political rhetoric is a central concern of political elites, and both the creation and disappearance of key terms and frames are often a “signal of political triumph and defeat” (Kinder & Sanders, 1990). Central to this body of work are questions related to how rhetoric spreads among political elites, particularly during elections. Additionally, in our current hybrid media system, it is critical to understand how messaging differs between different communication methods and how frames might disseminate from one political leader to another. This is especially important given how elites signal appropriate policy beliefs to their ideological constituencies. Such questions remain timely—and occasionally vexing—with the recent presidency of Donald Trump. As such, it is critical to understand how Trump’s linguistic choices, presentation style, and climate change rhetoric—both in formal and informal communication—may have shifted elite discourse on climate change.

In this chapter, we begin to investigate this broader research program through systematic qualitative content analysis. First we ask, how does President Trump talk about, or “frame,” climate change and energy policy? Second, how might the prevalence of different climate change frames differ between the President’s Twitter communications versus formally recorded video conversations?

## PREVIOUS RESEARCH

### Presidential Communication

After more than a year in office and following a dramatic campaign, President Trump has cemented his reputation as a bombastic communicator with stylistic and substantive particularities that are unprecedented



FIGURE 8.1 President Trump on Paris climate change agreement.

within the presidential office (see Figure 8.1). While anomalous in some ways, Donald Trump is not the only president to have a distinctive style. Clinton's shifting speech patterns and George W. Bush's "folksy-ness" have both been commented on by popular media and linguistics scholars. Scholars have noted the influence these stylistic choices have on both the tone and content of political discourse (Hart, 1987; Landau et al., 2004) and how stylistic choices can influence perceptions of leadership performance (de Vries, Bakker-Pieper, & Oostenveld, 2010).

Trump's communication style is also uniquely suited for the fractured media landscape and rising forms of new media. Stemming from work on the rhetorical presidency (Tulis, 1987), new scholarship explores the ubiquitous presidency as a framework for understanding presidential communication in this fragmented landscape (Scacco & Coe, 2016). Presidential ubiquity is based on an understanding that "modern presidents cultivate a highly visible and nearly constant presence" in modern American life by leveraging these different media sources to broaden their reach (Scacco & Coe, 2016, 2017). Scholars have also explored Trump's use of celebrity tactics to drive attention (Wells et al., 2016) and how his simple and often uncivil tactics on Twitter normalize right-wing populist discourse by reinforcing ideas of a "dangerous other" (Kreis, 2017; Ott, 2016).

Related to the ubiquitous nature of the modern presidency, presidential communication is critically linked with new technologies for disseminating messages, from the rise of the radio to social media (Scacco, Coe, & Hearit, 2018). Elites, including the president, use these tools to set a legislative agenda, spread issue frames, and build their image with both the media and the public (Conway, Kenski, & Wang, 2015, Scacco et al., 2018). These tools shift traditional dynamics between these different powers and, while past research found that the president is typically responsive to news media agendas (Edwards & Wood, 1999), new work examines whether leveraging these new media sources shifts presidential leadership relative to the news media, particularly in the president's ability to "narrowcast" and appeal directly to bases of support, circumventing the media (Eshbaugh-Soha, 2016).

In addition to the ability to bypass traditional media gatekeeping, the nature of these new technologies changes the nature of the communication itself. Social media communication is fundamentally personal, intimate, and often more emotionally driven than formal communication strategies (McGregor, Lawrence, & Cardona, 2017) and challenges the boundaries between what is public and what is personal (Papacharissi, 2015). In particular, there is a desire for "authenticity" in social media communication, presenting a challenge to professionalized campaigns and politicians that often relegate social media posts to staffers. As Enli (2017) highlights, this creates a window for an "authentic outsider," like Trump, whose tweets often included political incorrectness, name calling, and capital letters, all of which serve as markers that the tweets genuinely came from Trump himself. Interestingly, upon becoming president, Trump has continued to use his long-standing personal Twitter account—@realDonaldTrump—as opposed to using the @POTUS account that is more formally associated with the office.

The hybrid campaign strategy of presidential candidates and the ubiquitous nature of the presidency mean that politicians and presidents need to have "performative flexibility" in the way they communicate, "moving comfortably between different format criteria and expectations, from the formal to the informal, from the professionalized to the personalized" (Enli, 2017, p. 52). To be successful in this environment, presidents and presidential candidates must develop a consistent message, but also vary

that message across media types to reach the intended audience, in a way that seems authentic but still frames the message in a way that promotes policy goals and drives support for their platform both as a candidate and an acting president.

### **Climate Change: It's All a Hoax!**

President Trump's most colorful political rhetoric often focuses on undermining legislation championed by the Obama administration, including climate change policy. Work from climate change framing and communication research has reinforced the important role that elites like President Trump play in shaping climate discourse. In particular, political elites generate party cues, which signal to the American public what their opinions on contentious policy topics like climate change ought to be (Merkley & Stecula, 2018). For example, Republican voters develop climate change attitudes based on their own party leaders rejecting the scientific consensus and as a reaction to Democratic elites who openly support climate change science and policies. This highlights both the power of elite framing and the presence of boomerang effects that can compound partisan polarization and increase pushback against climate change policies (Zhou, 2017).

Such climate change "denialism" has successfully promulgated issue frames, or arguments, that undermine the legitimacy and urgency of climate change as a problem (Cann & Raymond, 2018), and contributed to delayed political action (Dunlap, 2014; Oreskes & Conway, 2010). However, recent climate change framing and media literature suggests that media attention to climate change skeptics has decreased across all media, especially as the scientific understanding of climate change has solidified (Boykoff, 2007; Young, 2011). While many Republican elites still act to stifle climate legislation, language of outright "denialism" has become increasingly rare. For example, in a 2013 sample of 340 climate-skeptic thinktank documents, Cann and Raymond (2018) find that the argument that climate change is not happening and there is no warming is present in only 17% of all documents. In contrast, nearly 30% of documents from the same sample argued a more moderate position that climate change may be happening, yet pinpointing why and how is difficult given the complexities of climate science.

The election of President Trump has almost certainly challenged this conventional understanding of how political elites talk about environmental issues like climate change. Instead of avoiding denialism, he doubled-down on both skeptical language and a broad “anti-intellectual” narrative, both as a candidate and a president. In tweets, he has called researchers “idiots,” suggested that scientists studying the safety of vaccines have ulterior motives, and implied that climate scientists have political agendas and are working for the Chinese (Motta, 2017). While this trend of anti-intellectual discourse goes beyond just Trump, his unprecedented rhetoric has likely expanded the “window” of acceptable discourse, highlighting the potential ability for a president to change the course of the conversation in ways that have long-lasting consequences for policy possibilities.

### The Power of Framing

Framing theory describes the process by which individuals attempt to interpret and make sense of the world around them (Goffman, 1974). A “frame” is a specific message unit that strategically emphasizes certain aspects of an issue while downplaying others, with the intention of influencing how people consider or perceive a particular issue or situation. Framing highlights “the process by which people develop a particular conceptualization of an issue or reorient their thinking about an issue” (Chong & Druckman, 2007a, p. 104). Specially, we focus our attention here on “issue frames,” which refers to the persuasive and strategic choices made by political actors intent on shaping the boundaries of political communication around a certain issue.

Overall, framing theory suggests that how an issue is characterized will powerfully shape the way it is interpreted and understood by its audience, as well as shaping perceptions around which actors should be held accountable for problems. For example, Nelson, Clawson, and Oxley (1997) demonstrate how a Ku Klux Klan rally is tolerated by the public, to very different degrees, depending on whether the rally is framed as an issue of public order or as an issue of free speech.

The impacts of such strategic framing endeavors on audiences, known as *framing effects* (Chong & Druckman, 2007a), thus pose powerful consequences for shaping the realm of possible policy responses to social issues. Besides work investigating the use of specific frames as related to distinct

policy topics, research has also explored various elements of frame delivery, such as frame strength (Chong & Druckman, 2007b) or the lasting power of frame effects through time (Lecheler & de Vreese, 2011), among other elements of framing in action.

Framing theory serves as a useful tool for beginning to think about the nature and potential impacts of President Trump's climate change discourse. Framing research has often sought to categorize the *effectiveness* of different frames in shaping attitudes toward issues like climate change, influenced in turn by frame persuasiveness or "strength." Existing scholarship suggests that perceived frame strength, while moderated by a variety of factors, is most notably influenced by several attributes: when a frame comes from a source that the audience deems credible (Chong & Druckman, 2007b), when it is congruent with an audience's previously held beliefs (Druckman & Nelson, 2003), or, more simply, when a frame is ubiquitously repeated, increasing its prevalence and making it more mentally "available" (Zaller, 1992).

Given this prior literature, we pose some general expectations for what our analysis will suggest about Trump's use of climate change and energy frames:

1. Frames will utilize (1) antiscience rhetoric and (2) proeconomic justifications against acting on climate change.
2. Twitter frames will focus on simple messages and potentially more "uncivil" framing.
3. Formal messaging (e.g., speeches) will utilize more moderate and nuanced framing.
4. There will be minimal differences between "informal" (Twitter) and "formal" (videos) messaging with consistency across mediums supporting a cohesive narrative.

## METHODS

We capitalize on the C-SPAN Video Library to complete a qualitative content analysis of both Donald Trump's speeches and floor speeches in Congress, and his tweets related to climate change and renewable energy. Our sample is composed of all Trump C-SPAN video clips, or "mentions,"

from June 16, 2015, to August 31, 2018, and all relevant tweets created prior to August 31, 2018. This time span contained several significant climate events, such as the Trump administration's announced intention to withdraw from the Paris Climate Accord, rollback of the Obama-era Clean Power Plan, various extreme weather events, and all milestones of the election cycle. We used keywords to search both Twitter and the C-SPAN Video Library to assemble our sample: "climate," "warming," "emissions," "energy," "carbon," and "greenhouse."

Items were considered relevant if they contained an argumentative frame connected to climate change and climate-related energy policy. More specifically, items discussing energy policy may not have been included in the sample if they did not make at least an implicit argument about climate change or climate policy. For example, a video clip that briefly mentioned the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge would be excluded from the sample. In contrast, a video where Trump describes "Unleashing American Energy" would be included, given the clip's implicit argument about the need to undo Obama-era climate change regulations that are perceived as hampering energy development. Again, this time frame runs through the 2016 campaigns and into Trump's presidency, and thus captures variation in his own political status as well. The relevant sample of C-SPAN videos and tweets were imported into qualitative coding software NVivo, and then human-coded for the presence or nonpresence of each detailed frame. As such, each item could contain multiple frames.

In terms of coding, we base our typology on the work of Cann and Raymond (2018). This exhaustive typology describes the frames used by actors who both oppose or support climate change policy and is grounded both in recent original research as well as prior work on climate change policy framing, especially in the range of climate-energy frames used by conservative think tanks (such as the Heartland Institute) who are internationally recognized for their longstanding opposition to action on the climate crisis. While scholars conceptualize and label climate-energy frames in diverse ways, we follow in the example of Cann and Raymond by identifying climate-energy frames as belonging to one of three broad "frame families": Science Frames, Climate Impact Frames, and Policy Design Frames (see Table 8.1). We further delineate each family by detailed frames, allowing for a more fine-grained assessment of frame content and nuance (not noted in Table 8.1).



TABLE 8.1 *Overview of Three Major Frame Families*

*Science frames*

The evidentiary basis of climate change is weak and even wrong. To varying degrees, contends that climate change does not exist and is not happening. Criticizes the scientific evidence that supports the existence of climate change: that it is human caused, poses negative consequences for humanity and planetary ecosystems, and requires policy action. Undermines the legitimacy of actors who generate evidence for climate change or call for climate action.

*Climate impact frames*

Climate change would be beneficial if it were to occur. Argues for the possible benefits of climate change. If global climate change does exist, it does not present a problem for human well-being—rather, it provides a range of benefits for both humans as well as natural systems.

*Policy design frames*

Climate change policies would do more harm than good. Posits that solutions for climate change are more detrimental than helpful, and specifically that policy proposals described by environmental proponents would generate a range of negative impacts outweighing any potential benefits.

# RESULTS

Our preliminary results highlight several interesting patterns in Trump's use of different energy and climate-related frames (Table 8.2). We are able to note initial trends in Trump's framing strategies, particularly in terms of comparing his Twitter statements and his televised speech events.

## Science Frames: "Global Warming"? It's Cold Outside!

As a group, science frames are arguments that focus on the technical reality and evidence for climate change. More to the point, Trump's portrayals attempt to undermine the legitimacy of climate change as a serious problem by questioning the quality of the scientific evidence for human-caused warming, or by attacking the motives of the researchers and actors who generate or promote a reality-based understanding of the problem.

In relation to science frames, our baseline assessment of Trump reveals interesting patterns in his use of science frames. One of the most striking observations is his divergent use of science frames in Twitter versus in his televised appearances. Just over 70% of all Trump's climate-energy tweets

**TABLE 8.2** *Prevalence of Climate-Energy Framing Strategies in Trump C-SPAN Video Appearances and Tweets*

	<i>Tweets</i> N = 138		<i>Videos</i> N = 77	
	N	%	N	%
<i>Science frames*</i>				
<i>The evidentiary basis of climate change is weak and even wrong.</i>	97	70.3	3	3.8
S1 Climate change is not happening and there is no warming.	72	52.2	0	0
S2 Climate change is a function of natural cycles and unrelated to human activity.	4	2.9	0	0
S3 Mainstream climate research is “junk” science.	5	3.6	0	0
S4 Climate change is a myth or scare tactic perpetuated by environmentalists, bureaucrats, and political leaders.	35	25.4	3	3.8
<i>Climate impact frames*</i>				
<i>Climate change would be beneficial if it were to occur.</i>	0	0	0	0
B1 Climate change would improve or damage our quality of life and health.	0	0	0	0
B2 Climate change would improve or damage our agriculture (including natural systems).	0		0	0
<i>Policy design frames*</i>				
<i>Climate change policies would do more harm than good.</i>	54	39.1	76	98.7
E1 Policy harms or helps the national economy.	28	20.3	52	67.5
E2 Policy economically harms or helps businesses.	1	0.7	9	11.7
E3 Policy harms or helps consumers.	2	1.4	12	15.6
E4 Policy harms or helps workers.	2	1.4	28	36.3
SO1 Policy would threaten international sovereignty.	1	0.7	23	29.9
SO2 Policy would infringe on sovereignty, at the state or local level.	0	0	2	2.6
EN Policy would harm or help the environment.	4	2.9	2	2.6
UE Policy would promote unreliable energy systems, leading to energy shortages or blackouts.	5	3.6	0	0
QL Policy would harm or help quality of life.	6	4.3	0	0
NE Climate policy would not be effective.	5	3.6	3	3.9
LP Policy would be unnecessary, because climate change is not a priority compared to other issues.	13	9.4	18	23.4

\*Percentage of videos featuring at least one frame of the Science, Impact, or Policy Design type. Typology modified from Cann and Raymond (2018).

contain at least one of the climate science frames, as compared to only 3.8% of his C-SPAN videos—a 66.2 percentage-point difference. Of the more detailed subframes, the most widespread was what might be considered the most explicitly climate change “denier” claim: that climate change is simply not happening and that there is no evidence of warming (frame S1). This portrayal appeared in half of all climate-energy tweets in our sample. These frame iterations typically included Trump’s assertions that regions of the United States were uncharacteristically cold, thus proving that climate change was not happening:

Snow and ice, freezing weather in Texas, Arizona and Oklahoma—what the hell is going on with GLOBAL WARMING? (November 23, 2013)

Another science frame, S4, casts climate change as a ploy used by dishonest actors for their personal gain. This argument also appeared disproportionately in tweets versus video appearances: appearing in 25.4% of videos sampled, versus 3.8% of tweets. Here, Trump often contests that climate change is a con, by arguing that the shift from “global warming” to the more scientifically accurate term “climate change” was a deliberate tactic from actors attempting to manipulate the public for their personal gain:

President Obama spends so much time speaking of the so-called Carbon footprint, and yet he flies all the way to Hawaii on a massive old 747. (December 19, 2015)

Any and all weather events are used by the GLOBAL WARMING HOAXSTERS to justify higher taxes to save our planet! They don’t believe it \$\$\$\$! (January 26, 2014)

Last, science frames that cast climate change as a function of natural cycles (S2, 2.9%) and a critique of mainstream climate science (S3, 3.6%) both appeared to a lesser extent in the Twitter portion of our sample.

### **Policy Design Frames: Deregulate and Unleash American Energy**

In contrast to science frames, policy design frames focus on the alleged benefits or burdens of climate-energy policy, whether in describing

specific policies or by discussing regulation more broadly. Given Trump's emphasis on deregulation, Obama-era rollbacks, and critiques of Clinton, our framing analysis of these kinds of arguments includes frames that are both positive and negative in nature, with Trump's policy goals contrasted against those of his predecessor and political opponent.

In our sample, we find that policy design frames are prevalent in both forms of media, though become nearly ubiquitous in Trump's video appearances: 98% percent of the C-SPAN sample contained at least one of the policy design frames, versus less than half of all tweets, at 39.1%. Of these policy frames, the most prevalent by far were financial claims. On both Twitter and in recorded speeches, the president's most widespread economic frame drew attention to the state of the national economy (frame E1). This frame featured in 20.3% of our sampled tweets and in 67.5% of C-SPAN video appearances.

This kind of framing strategy highlights the allegedly negative consequences that climate-energy policies would pose for the national economy, and how the Trump administration's policy rollbacks would lead to nationwide economic growth. This sentiment is widely expressed by Trump with a statement about "releasing American energy"—that is, by terminating climate-energy policies that are meant to support renewable energy and decrease carbon emissions.

Another economic frame that differs between the two mediums is an argument about how a policy would harm or help specific types of American workers (such as steel workers and miners) who Trump claims are harmed by climate-energy regulations (frame E4). This frame was evident in 36.3% of all videos in our sample, as compared to only 1.4% of relevant tweets. Two other types of economic frames appear to a lesser extent and highlight how policies would help or harm businesses (frame E2) or consumers, including low-income and minority communities (frame E3).

Besides economic frames, two other policy design frames are notable. First, Trump characteristically emphasized how climate-energy policies would infringe on America's internal sovereignty (frame SO1). This argument was apparent in 36.3% of video appearances, and to a strikingly lesser extent in Twitter posts, at 0.7%. This colorful frame argues that American engagement with international climate change policy, such as the Paris Accord, is damaging to U.S. independence and is generally unfair:

Under the agreement, China will be able to increase emissions by a staggering number of years. . . . they can do whatever they want. . . . not us . . . there are many other examples. But the bottom line is that the Paris Accord is very unfair, at the highest level, to the United States. (C-SPAN Video Library, 2018, February 23.)

While this statement does feature financial concerns, the primary argument is more accurately understood as a protest against international intrusion onto American sovereignty: that the United States does more than its “fair share” and is taken advantage of by other states. An argument about harm to sovereignty at the state level is also present, to a much lesser extent, and highlights the perceived unfairness of Environmental Protection Agency intrusion onto family farms, for example.

Second, Trump also employed a frame contending that climate-energy policies were unnecessary because climate change is not a priority compared to other kinds of issues (such as terrorism or the threat of nuclear attack). This frame, LP, appeared in 23.4% of video appearances and in 9.4% of tweets. This argument was often linked to specific political actors who advanced climate-energy policies, who Trump would then disparage for their misplaced priorities:

We should be focusing on beautiful, clean air & not on wasteful and very expensive GLOBAL WARMING bullshit! (December 15, 2013)

The Obama-Clinton crew spent \$50 billion on climate programs when they should have used that money to help Florida farmers fight diseases that threaten your crops. (C-SPAN Video Library, October 12, 2013)

Several other policy design frames also appeared in small numbers. These less common arguments highlighted how climate-energy policies actually harm the environment (for example, that wind turbines kill eagles, frame EN), that policies would create unreliable energy systems (UE) that decrease quality of life (frame QL), and that policies would not be effective, especially given the inaction or duplicity of other states (frame NE).

### Climate Benefit Frames

We note in passing that no climate benefit frames appeared in any items in our sample. This is consistent with prior research, which has found the minimal presence of climate change benefit frames in “skeptical” publications (McCright & Dunlap, 2000; Cann & Raymond, 2018), which may indicate their waning influence in public discourse.

### DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Broadly, this preliminary analysis confirms our belief that Donald Trump is using antiscience arguments in discourse against climate change. Critically, it also shows a dramatic difference in the way Trump frames climate change on Twitter versus in more formal speeches. In his televised appearances, he talks primarily about policy, compared to his tweets where he focuses on denigrating climate science. Videos also feature a greater diversity of framing strategies compared to the repetitive nature of his tweets on climate change. These findings support recent communication scholarship on both the nature of Trump’s communication and discourse on Twitter. Scholars have found that Trump ranks among the top three least civil presidents since Franklin Roosevelt (an honor shared with Harry Truman and George H. W. Bush), even when looking only at formal speeches. This incivility is only exacerbated by scholarship arguing that discourse on Twitter is markedly different than in traditional arenas and tends to be simplistic, impulsive, and uncivil (Ott, 2017).

Trump does make use of contentious science frames in his discourse, but relatively speaking, these kinds of combative frames are largely absent from the president’s televised speeches. Rather, they emerge through his personal Twitter account. Importantly, many of the most aggressive or far-fetched anti-climate-science tweets produced by Trump date from prior to his bid for presidency. This indicates that he could be moderating his positions in response to his new public position or that new scrutiny is limiting the impulsivity of his comments. This, and the relatively simplistic and uncivil nature of discourse on Twitter, are evidenced by the repetitive nature of his tweets and the disproportionate prevalence of

S1 and S4 frames. In some ways, S1 and S4 are the most extreme or inflammatory science frames. The first declares unequivocally that climate change is simply not occurring—in contrast to the significant body of expert scholarship indicating otherwise—while S4 often contains personal attacks about the motives and morality of specific actors.

Additionally, E4 being so widely prevalent in Trump's video speeches (especially campaign speeches) is indicative of his distinct communication style of personal engagement and seeming authenticity. Trump often frames environmental policy as destructive to the working class and makes personal appeals to workers (particularly coal workers) about getting them their jobs back. This is reflective of his "everyman" stylistic approach to reaching voters.

While there are many key differences between Trump's framing of climate change through informal and formal channels, there are also some similarities. We find that Trump has a consistent voice across both mediums when he refers back to the economy and when he makes claims about climate change being low priority compared to other policy concerns. When looking at economic frames in particular, while they are much more common in speeches (67%), they are also a core part of his Twitter messaging strategy as well, with 20% of tweets containing an economic frame. Relatedly, E3, the consumer frame, is not as prevalent as potentially expected (Raymond, 2016), despite research that shows that consumer frames have become more important in on-the-ground policy development.

This is a particularly important finding, as scholars have noted that personalized frames are influential at shaping public sentiment and support for renewable energy policies (Boyd, Liu, & Hmielowski, 2018; Harrison & Sundstrom, 2010), and that individually borne financial costs may be one of the public's highest concerns when it comes energy discussions (Bessette & Arvai, 2018). Indeed, Stokes and Warshaw (2017) find that survey respondents' support for renewable energies is tied closely to perceived changes in their electricity bills, as well as perceived opportunities for job creation. Other scholarship convincingly argues that discussion around personalized financial impacts are also important as part of actual policy processes (Raymond, 2016; Rabe, 2018). It could be that these worker appeals are Trump's way of highlighting the personal financial

costs, but, in this case, he deviates somewhat from what scholars believe to be the most effective strategy for either building or reducing climate policy support.

In closing, future stages of this project will assess, more broadly, the climate change framing strategies of elected officials using these data as a comparison to understand if Trump's climate change rhetoric shapes broader elite discourse on climate change, and, based on this analysis, what elements of his rhetoric are most effective at shaping these elite responses. Because his formal and informal framing of climate change differs so clearly, this will be an important test of whether lines are blurred between informal and formal discourse in our current system. Future content analyses will code for a broad range of demographic and other attributes, such as gender, party, which specific policy is under discussion, and whether speech is in support or opposition to the policy, or if discussion is on a specific bill versus grand strategy, audience reaction, emotion of speaker (e.g., Do we see increase in Democratic aggression?), and if and under what conditions other actors mention Trump explicitly in their own discussion of climate-energy issues.

This project advances our knowledge of how the president's use of holistic tools of communication can shape elite discourse, which has powerful ramifications for important policy issues. Climate change is a critical case both as a substantive field of interest, as well as to explore President Trump's rhetoric more broadly and how it may shape the wider elite discourse around a contentious policy topic.

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## CHAPTER 9

# NONVERBAL CUES IN CONGRESSIONAL SPEECHES: A WINK AND A NOD TO TWITTER ENGAGEMENT

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Starting in 1979, the creation of C-SPAN gave Americans across the nation something new: a chance to watch their legislators in action as they made laws in real time. Since C-SPAN is a visual medium, it offers viewers at home a sense of not only what their legislators said but also the style in which it was said. Recently, C-SPAN has expanded its reach to post content on its fully archived website and social media sites, allowing viewers to connect with the content across multiple platforms. This research utilizes C-SPAN videos on the Twitter platform to measure what content from Congress is most engaging to viewers. We examine what aspects of congressional floor speeches and press conferences posted by C-SPAN on Twitter lead to engagement with that video content. Particularly interesting to this study is whether viewers are more engaged with speeches when members of Congress are using a persuasive speaking style. A body of research from communication has indicated that specific nonverbal cues, such as facial expressions, gaze, body orientation, and use of gestures, can

have as much or greater impact on viewers' perceptions than the content of the message itself (Bucy, 2011; Gong & Bucy, 2016; Sullivan & Masters, 1988). We further test these theories by applying them to the speeches of Congress members when they are viewed on a social media platform.

While congressional scholars have investigated the content of floor speeches and their implications for the policy process (Maltzman & Sigelman, 1996), little is known about how these speeches influence constituents at home. How voters respond to the floor speeches and press conferences of senators and representatives has yet to be fully investigated. We specifically measure whether the public speaking style itself is particularly engaging to viewers. That is, if members of Congress employ persuasive nonverbal cues while speaking, does that create a more engaging impression on speech viewers?

It is important to study whether speeches given by members of Congress are more effective if delivered in a way that is consistent with the most persuasive public speaking practices. Of relevance both to the field of political science and members of Congress is whether the performance aspect of debate and speeches is necessary or beneficial to the preparation for floor speeches. Members of Congress make strategic and rationally motivated decisions in how they present information based on the proximity of their reelection and their need to connect with constituents (Fenno, 1978; Hill & Hurley, 2002). We build on this knowledge to better understand how members might integrate speaking style to their strategic choices on making floor speeches and holding press conferences. If style and manner of presentation have an impact on exciting interest from constituents, then it should influence the type of preparation and effort that members put into their use of speaking time on the floor.

This research addresses an open question in the political communication literature of how important speaking style is to engagement with members of Congress, especially in the era of social media dominance. We provide context on whether it is essential for members of Congress to develop a dynamic speaking style to build a compelling way for voters to connect and engage with them, mainly via the social media platform Twitter. Using clipped videos posted on the official C-SPAN Twitter account (@CSPAN), this research builds on the literature by measuring the relationship between the level of engagement between Twitter users and

videos of Congress members with more or less persuasive speaking styles. We find evidence that, in contrast to the literature on presidential speech making, Twitter viewers of congressional speeches react more to speech on trending issues than persuasive nonverbal cues.

## PRESIDENTIAL SPEECH MAKING AND NONVERBAL ASSESSMENTS

The visual aspects of speech have a marked impact on viewers, with particular nonverbal cues resulting in more positive or agreeable reactions to the speaker, both in conjunction with and in isolation of the speaking topic. Speeches that are presented with greater vocal emphasis, facial expressions, and gestures are evaluated by viewers as more powerful, self-assured, and lively (Jackob, Roessing, & Petersen, 2011). Other evaluations have rated speakers with frequent eye contact, body proximity movements, and smiling as having better competence, character, composure, or sociability. Body tension or stiffness is negatively associated with credibility and sociability judgments (Burgoon, Birk, & Pfau, 1990).

Much of the existing literature on the impact of nonverbal cues in politics comes from presidential speeches or debates. Nonverbal cues, and particularly facial expressions, have been found to have a considerable impact on viewer response to presidential candidates. Viewer perceptions of candidate likability have been connected to their appropriate use of facial expression (Lanzetta, Sullivan, Masters, & McHugo, 1985). Visual expressions of happiness/reassurance from a leader result in feelings of joy and warmth in the viewers. Interestingly, these positive impacts are more pronounced when video is presented without the sound (McHugo, Lanzetta, Sullivan, Masters, & Englis, 1985). In a 2012 study of the first and third presidential debates between President Barack Obama and Mitt Romney, researchers found viewers evaluated candidates based on nonverbal cues such as facial expressions. Viewers were perceptive of the nonverbal cues given by both Obama and Romney and evaluated each differently in segments where they displayed more appropriate or confident nonverbal cues than when they did not (Gong & Bucy, 2016). In step with previous research on the topic (Ekman & Oster, 1979; Sullivan & Masters, 1988), viewers were more likely to recall their impressions of

the candidate's nonverbal cues than they were the substance of the debate itself. Viewers are more likely to use nonverbal shortcuts for the analysis of the speaker when the information provided is particularly complex, as is common with political messaging (Gong & Bucy, 2016). Other research has concluded that all parts of speech are valuable to the evaluations of leaders' speaking styles, including the audio and visuals in isolation and together (Nagel, Maurer, & Reinemann, 2012).

### C-SPAN IN THE TWITTER ERA

C-SPAN's mission is to provide content on government proceedings without editing or filtering. All video, on television and Twitter, is to be presented without a point of view (C-SPAN, 2017c). C-SPAN provides gavel-to-gavel coverage of all proceedings of the House of Representatives, and C-SPAN2 does the same for Senate proceedings. The C-SPAN3 network covers public affairs (C-SPAN, 2017b). All proceedings of the House and Senate are presented on C-SPAN without editorial content. In 2010, the media company expanded to provide digitized video on the C-SPAN Online Video Library (C-SPAN, 2017d), allowing users to view, clip, and share almost 250,000 hours of C-SPAN footage (Browning, 2014).

Videos from all three C-SPAN networks are represented in the verified C-SPAN Twitter account, which has been active since July 2008. As of January 2018, the C-SPAN Twitter account had 1.91 million followers, 975 likes, and 34,000 tweets. Unlike C-SPAN on television, the C-SPAN Twitter account provides C-SPAN video content in two ways. The first is to link via tweet to longer videos or live feed. The other is to embed a short video clip that can be watched in the tweet without leaving Twitter. The present research focuses on examining the influence the latter—the embedded video clip.

C-SPAN has a high percentage of users who access its content via the Internet either instead of or in conjunction with traditional television viewing. Fifty-six percent of C-SPAN users use a laptop, tablet, or smartphone as one method for accessing C-SPAN video (C-SPAN, 2017a). Recognizing that more people are accessing video outside of the traditional realm of the television, C-SPAN CEO Susan Swain said in 2013 that the company



is adapting to disseminating content in a changing marketplace, and that includes social media sites:

So we sometimes say, “It’s not your father’s C-SPAN,” but the reality is we have to today be both our father’s C-SPAN and our grandson’s C-SPAN, because there are all kinds of people who are interested in what happens in this town, but they’re interested in accessing that in different ways—through the Internet, Twitter, and mobile devices such as their smartphones—and we want to be there for them. (Steinberg, 2013)

This expansion of content to multiple C-SPAN platforms creates more opportunities for new and existing C-SPAN users to interact with the video.

A new body of research measures what happens when consumers of political events react to their leaders using social media sites on their computers, smartphones, or tablets. Similar to previous experimental findings that have measured how viewers react to content of politicians speaking on television, more recent research has tested these ideas with the addition of how viewers react to the same kinds of content on social media or “the second screen.” Similar to what has been found using traditional television media, the nonverbal displays of politicians during debates also drive responses on social media more so than the actual content of the debate (Shah et al., 2016). During the 2012 Obama and Romney debates, facial expressions and physical gestures were more predictive of the volume and valence of Tweets than other coded variables of verbal utterances, voice tone, and persuasive strategies (Shah, Hanna, Bucy, Wells, & Quevedo, 2015). Political leaders are taking note of the power of social media as a communication medium. As the general public has moved away from sending letters and even making phone calls, the availability of social media allows for an interactive connection between elected officials and constituents in a manner that did not exist previously (Glassman, Straus, & Shogan, 2013; Shogan, 2010). More communications resources are shifting to social media as senators and representatives employ it as a strategy to reach large audiences and influence campaign outcomes (Glassman et al., 2013); thus they are interested in and responsive to how they are viewed on social media.

After C-SPAN's 10 years on Twitter and building to 1.91 million followers, it is important to examine what type of content—images, text, and video—tweeted on @CSPAN is effective concerning a user's level of Twitter engagement. It is well known that the impact of posts and tweets depends on the content and format of the tweet itself. For example, tweets with photos garner a 35% increase in retweets, followed by tweets with videos (28%), quotes (19%), and hashtags (16%) (Rogers, 2014). Engagement on Twitter is also dependent on the platform's technological design. Unlike Facebook and Instagram, Twitter is designed to perform as a megaphone to followers, allowing bursts of content with a shorter lifespan (most engagement occurs within the first hour of a tweet). Thus, Twitter's short-form platform only allows one "type" of post, rather than an "event" or "note" on Facebook or a "story" on Instagram. Tweets primarily include text, hashtags, tags, photos, and video, with images and videos embedded directly below text. As of 2015, tweeted videos automatically play in a user's Twitter feed.

Recent studies examine this critical link between visual images on social media and online engagement in a variety of contexts, such as protest movements (Neumayer & Rossi, 2018; Vraga, Bode, Wells, Driscoll, & Thorson, 2014), political campaigning (Muñoz & Towner, 2017a), presidential debates (Shah et al., 2016), and health information dissemination (Guidry et al., 2018). Image content and its relationship to digital engagement has been studied by examining content (Hu, Manikonda, & Kambhampati, 2014), filter use (Bakhshi, Shamma, Kennedy, & Gilbert, 2014), the inclusion of faces (Bakhshi, Shamma, & Gilbert, 2014; Muñoz & Towner, 2017b), and candidate self-framing with photos and pictures (Muñoz & Towner, 2017). For instance, Muñoz & Towner (2017a) found that candidates who employed the "ideal candidate image" on Instagram received the highest number of user likes and comments. Similar research conducted on Instagram also has found that images that contained the faces received more likes and comments (Bakhshi et al., 2014; Muñoz & Towner, 2017b).

For Congress members, their face and image are a central feature of their "brand." Their face, body language, and hand movements are powerful nonverbal communication tools that are likely to influence a Congress member's likeability and credibility. Our research offers insight as to which nonverbal visual strategies Congress members employ in C-SPAN clipped

videos are most successful in garnering higher rates of digital engagement on Twitter. Past research has urged the use of C-SPAN content for measuring facial expression and emotion in public figures (Kowal, 2014). User engagement on Twitter is vital to Congress members, as they seek to reach a broad audience, increase relationships with their constituents, and garner media and public attention. In the same vein, a Twitter user's likes and comments are important to C-SPAN as a nonprofit company, as it seeks to make government more open and accessible to both offline and online citizens. Therefore, to test how much Twitter users engage with @CSPAN videos that display leaders utilizing different speaking styles, this research examines C-SPAN video clips posted on Twitter of House and Senate floor speeches and press conferences. Below, we propose the following research question and hypothesis:

**RQ1:** On C-SPAN's Twitter feed, to what extent do video clipped speeches given by members of the House of Representatives and Senate employ nonverbal body language, such as smile, gestures, torso movement?

**RQ2:** On C-SPAN's Twitter feed, to what extent do video clipped speeches given by members of the House of Representatives and Senate employ nonverbal visual aids or cues, such as floor charts or props?

**Hypothesis 1:** Video clipped speeches given by members of the House of Representatives and Senate using more nonverbal cues will more be likely to receive engagement on Twitter than speeches that use less nonverbal cues.

## METHOD

To address the above research questions and hypothesis, we content analyzed clipped videos of U.S. Congressional House and Senate members tweeted by C-SPAN's verified Twitter feed (@CSPAN) between January 3, 2018, and August 31, 2018. The starting date represents the first day that the 2nd Session of the 115th Congress convened. The end date was set to the end of August to capture the Senate chamber's shortened summer recess and return to Washington in August. During this 8-month period,

the House was in session for 89 days and the Senate was in session 135 days. To be included in the sample, clips must include: (1) a member of Congress speaking during floor debate, speeches, or press events in his or her official capacity; and (2) one central figure speaking. We excluded clips that were: (1) retweeted by C-SPAN from other Twitter accounts; (2) clips of committee action, because speakers in those videos are typically in a seated position rather than standing with trunk movement; and (3) linked video that must be viewed via the C-SPAN Video Library website and live feed video. Therefore, the data include 144 clipped videos—68 clips from the House and 76 from the Senate.

## Coding Scheme

### *Twitter engagement*

Our dependent variable, Twitter engagement, is defined as when someone interacts with posted content, such as liking, retweeting, and commenting on a tweet (Twitter, 2018). To capture Twitter engagement for C-SPAN House and Senate video clips, we recorded the number of comments, retweets, and likes for each clip at midnight EST on the day the clip was tweeted. Then, comments, retweets, and likes are summed into an overall index of engagement for each video. At the beginning of the period (January 2018), the C-SPAN Twitter account had 1.91 million followers, 975 likes, and 34,000 Tweets. By August 2018, the C-SPAN Twitter account had the same number of followers but increased to 1,068 likes and 36,000 tweets. Indeed, internal research from Twitter indicates that the inclusion of a video or photo in a Tweet increases engagement with the tweet compared to tweets without video. Tweets with videos garner 28% more retweets. Thus, we can expect that engagement on all the sampled tweets would be more substantial than engagement with other tweets on the C-SPAN account without photos or videos (Rogers, 2014).

### *Nonverbal visual cues*

To systematically code for the first independent variable—nonverbal body language cues in C-SPAN House and Senate video clips—we adapted the visual coding schemes from Burgoon, Birk, and Pfau (1990) and Nagel, Maurer, and Reinemann (2012). Each C-SPAN video clip was viewed in its entirety and then, focusing on the speaker, we coded for the presence of

the following characteristics: (1) smile, (2) torso movement, and (3) hand gesture. A Congress member's "smile" was coded based on two different smile prompts: a smile must consist of the upper teeth or both upper and lower teeth, and a smile with upturned mouth corners (Sullivan & Masters, 1988). "Torso movement" was coded when a member had a loose body posture throughout their torso/trunk. In this case, the torso is moving loosely, and arms are held loosely at sides or moving slightly (Burgoon et al., 2000). "Hand gestures" include when a member is moving their hands and arms while speaking and in synchrony with their speech. Hand gestures are considered expressive when members are emphasizing a point or raising their hand(s) to refer to themselves or other members.

To code for our second independent variable—nonverbal visual aids—we coded for the presence of a floor chart, poster, or prop that relates to the speech being delivered. A poster can be held in the hand(s) or on an easel that is adjacent to the speaker. A floor chart must be visible in the video frame while the speaker is talking. Professionally printed posters, handwritten posters, or oversized papers are also included. Regarding props beyond posters and floor charts, we also code for a member holding or referring to an item(s) for any length of time, particularly when illustrating a point in the speech. If a member were to lift a glass of water to take a drink, this is not a prop, unless the drink was to illustrate a point about drinking water.

Each nonverbal characteristic—smile, torso movement, hand gesture, and poster/prop—was coded as a "1" if present in the video clip and a "0" if not present. The three nonverbal body language characteristics are combined into an index so that each video has an overall score of nonverbal cues present in the video on a scale of 0 to 3 with 0 representing no nonverbal cues in the video and 3 representing the presence of all three possible nonverbal characteristics. The poster/prop, visual aid variable remained dichotomous: "1" for the presence of chart or poster and "0" if a chart or poster was not present.

### *Control variables*

We controlled for a number of additional factors that might explain likes, retweets, and comments on C-SPAN video clips. We coded for speaker characteristics, particularly if the speaker in the video clip is a woman, a leader, and a Senate member. Presently, women hold 19% of the House

seats and 23% of the Senate (Center for American Women and Politics, 2018). Hence, the presence of a female speaker might boost Twitter engagement, as Twitter users may feel video clips of female legislators are more engaging due to their status as underrepresented House and Senate members. In addition, female candidates and officeholders are often viewed as a novelty in politics at the national level, and as a result may draw more attention on C-SPAN's Twitter feed (i.e., Lawless & Pearson, 2008; O'Regan & Stambough, 2011). We also coded if a speaker in the video clip was a leader in the House and Senate, particularly the Speaker of the House, House Minority Leader, Senate Majority Leader, and Senate Minority Leader. Leadership is likely linked to Twitter engagement because leaders in the House and Senate are better known and more immediately recognizable by the American public. That is, their "celebrity status" increases likes, retweets, and comments. Each characteristic—female, leader, and Senate member—was coded as a "1" if present in the video clip and a "0" if not present. Last, we include a dichotomous variable to indicate if the clip was of a Senator or Representative—a "1" if the clip was of a Senator and "0" if the clip was of a House member. Since Senators are usually more visible and well known, video clips from the Senate chamber may generate more engagement.

We also controlled for features commonly found in tweet content, particularly the presence of hashtags, tags, and web links, which might be linked to engagement. We anticipated that hashtags and tags might increase Twitter engagement because they allow users to more easily find the content, people, and organizations on Twitter in which they are interested. Moreover, tweets with hashtags receive a 16% increase in retweets than tweets without hashtags (Rogers, 2014). In addition, we controlled for the presence of a web link or URL in clipped video tweets, as we expected web links to boost the number of likes, comments, and retweets. Oftentimes, a web link to the full C-SPAN video was tweeted along with the clipped video. Followers might use the C-SPAN Twitter feed as a hub for trending content, quickly linking them to the main C-SPAN website for more information. Studies have shown that tweets containing links receive 86% more retweets than regular tweets (Cooper, 2013). Last, we controlled for the length of the clipped C-SPAN video in seconds because we expected Twitter engagement to decrease with video length.

That is, Twitter users will watch more of a short, 30-second clipped video than a 5-minute video. Fishman (2016) reports that engagement remains steady for up to two minutes but then engagement declines beyond the two-minute mark.

While this study focuses on the impact of nonverbal visual cues, we also control for some verbal communication in each clipped video. We controlled for a speaker's reference to President Trump because we expected that—similar to the presence of House and Senate leaders—his newsworthy role as commander-and-chief would bolster Twitter engagement. The video clip was coded as a “1” if the House or Senate member referred to the president and a “0” if there was no mention. Next, we coded for political issues referenced by House and Senate speakers in each clipped video. We expect the discussion of some issues, such as immigration, may generate Twitter engagement as they are more prominent in the current media agenda and are the most important problems among the citizenry (see Newport, 2018). Based on prior research (e.g., Conway, Kenski, & Want, 2015; Tedesco, 2001, 2005), we crafted a coding sheet including 23 issue categories: abortion, affirmative action, banking, budget, campaign finance, crime/guns, corruption/ethics, drugs, economy, education, environment, equality, foreign policy, health care, immigration, income equality, intelligence, military, minimum wage, religion, social security, tax, and welfare. (See Appendix 9.1.) Each C-SPAN video clip was watched in its entirety and coded for one issue. For example, if the speaker was discussing foreign policy, the video clip was coded as “1” for foreign policy and “0” for no mention of foreign policy. If the speaker mentioned several issues, only one main issue was coded.

### *Coding procedure*

Before coding clipped videos, we created a codebook containing each nonverbal visual characteristics as well as the verbal categories for mentions of the president and political issues. (See Appendix 9.2.) For training purposes, a small sample of clipped videos was examined before coding took place. Once adjustments were made to the codebook, we watched all clipped videos in their entirety and coded for the presence of a characteristic as a “1” and the absence as “0.” Inter-coder reliability was measured using Krippendorff's alpha, where values above .80 represent strong

reliability (Hayes & Krippendorff, 2007). A third coder, an undergraduate student trained in content analysis, independently coded a randomly selected 10% subsample of the previously coded nonverbal visual cues. The Krippendorff's Alpha score is .81 across all characteristics—smile, torso movement, hand gesture, and poster/prop.

## RESULTS

Table 9.1 presents the reliability coefficients for the dependent and main independent variables as well as the descriptive statistics for all variables examined. On C-SPAN's Twitter page, the median number of video clips posted each day was about two clips, with eight video clips being the highest number of clips posted in one day. Fifty-two percent of the video clips were of senators. The majority of Twitter engagement was "liking" posts, averaging 339.1 likes. The latter is not surprising, as liking content is the easiest and fastest way to engage on Twitter. The number of "likes" was followed by the number of retweets, averaging 157.8 retweets, and then comments, averaging 80.4 comments. Commenting on posts requires the most time and commitment and is commonly the lowest form of engagement on social media. Overall, video clips on C-SPAN's Twitter feed attracted a fair amount of Twitter engagement from users (mean = 577.36).

The first research question (RQ#1) asked the extent to which video clipped speeches given by Congress members employ nonverbal body language, such as smile, gestures, and torso movement. The content analysis reveals that a majority of body language visuals in video clips were hand gestures (67%), followed by torso movement (56%), and then smile (35%). As Table 9.1 shows, the average Total Visuals score was 1.58 (SD = 1.09) with a range of 0 to 3. Almost 80% of the video clips examined contained 1 or more forms of nonverbal body language. This indicates that a considerable proportion of clipped videos on Twitter portray Congress members delivering speeches with visual communication and body language. For instance, hand gestures, such as quick flicks of the hands emphasizing a certain word, were often employed by speakers to draw attention to a



TABLE 9.1 *Descriptive Statistics: Twitter Engagement, Nonverbal Visuals, and Other Characteristics*

Variable	Mean	SD	Min.	Max.	Percentage
<i>Dependent Variable</i>					
Twitter Engagement Index <i>Cronbach's alpha</i> = .60	577.36	1386.30	25	10822	—
<i>Independent Variables</i>					
Nonverbal Visual Body Language Index <i>Cronbach's alpha</i> = .76	1.58	1.09	0	3	—
Nonverbal Floor Charts/Props	—	—	—	—	10
<i>Control Variables</i>					
Clip Time (in seconds)	139.93 (2 min.)	110.16	17	521 (about 9 min.)	—
Female	—	—	—	—	19.5
Leader	—	—	—	—	56.9
Hashtag	—	—	—	—	20.1
Tag	—	—	—	—	91.6
President	—	—	—	—	27.7
Web link	—	—	—	—	41.1
Senate	—	—	—	—	52.7

Note: *N* = 144 clips.

certain point. Other visual cues included choppy body movements behind the chamber podium, moving body and arms around forcefully to convey a message. For example, a video clip of Representative Lee Zeldin includes all elements—smile, torso movement, and hand gestures (January 19, 2018, <https://twitter.com/cspan/status/954358085476372481>).

The second research question (RQ#2) asked the extent to which video clipped speeches given by members employ nonverbal visual aids or cues, such as floor charts or props. The content analysis reports that very few clipped speeches—only 10%—included visual aids, with floor charts (6%) more frequently used by speakers than props (4%). For example, a video clip of Representative Hakeem Jeffries (Figure 9.1) delivering a speech alongside a floor chart with the word “Treason?” (February 6,

2018, <https://twitter.com/cspan/status/960895816251707393>). Similarly, the Twitter feed included a video clip of Representative Nancy Pelosi referring to a floor chart on “Congress Must Act Now” during a press conference on gun safety (February 15, 2018, <https://twitter.com/cspan/status/964176668624646144>). In the posted clipped videos, props were used minimally by speakers but consisted of photos (June 13, 2018, <https://twitter.com/cspan/status/1006912310957543424>), a paper heart on Valentine’s Day (February 14, 2018, <https://twitter.com/cspan/status/963813779564781568>), and Congress members’ children (June 20, 2018, <https://twitter.com/cspan/status/1009433637962514439>). Considering the results of RQ#1 and #2, clipped videos of congressional speakers on Twitter include more non-verbal body language cues than nonverbal visual aids.

Another interesting descriptive result reported in Table 9.1 is that over half (56.9%) of the video clips included a House or Senate leader. From the Senate, Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-KY) was frequently clipped making statements in response to events, such as Justice Kennedy’s retirement, and relevant legislation. Similarly, the C-SPAN Twitter feed included clips of Minority Leader Chuck Schumer (D-NY) speaking on the chamber floor about criminal allegations against President Trump (April 10, 2018, <https://twitter.com/cspan/status/983724930775830531>)

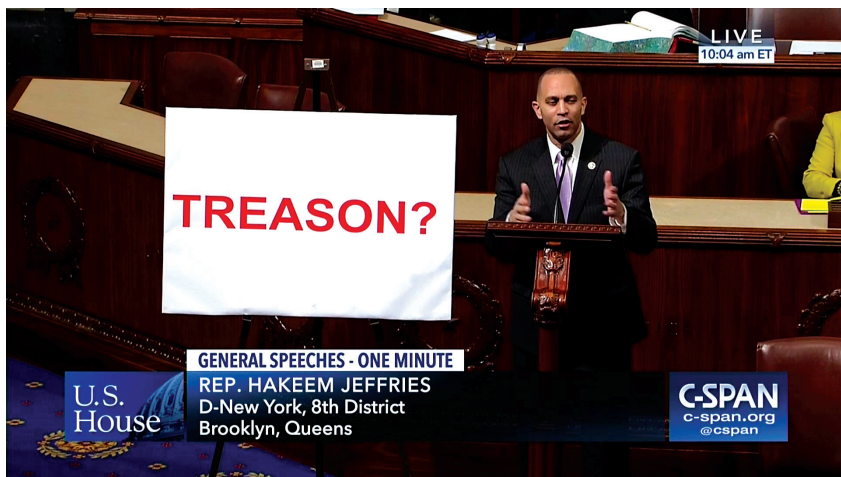


FIGURE 9.1 Rep. Jeffries one-minute speech.

as well as immigration issues (June 18, 2018, <https://twitter.com/cspan/status/1008802725709172737>). From the House, Speaker Paul Ryan (R-WI) and Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi (D-CA) were regularly clipped and posted on Twitter, due to their weekly press conferences. Of the total 67 House clips, 43 (64%) of the clips featured Pelosi or Ryan as the main speaker. Notably, this includes five clips where Pelosi exceeded the House of Representatives record for the longest address on the House floor for her 8-hour speech on protecting undocumented migrants (February 7, 2018, <https://twitter.com/cspan/status/961341001821573120>). The recorded clips of women skew heavily towards the House, with Pelosi as minority leader. The Senate clips had only six clips that featured a female speaker. Not surprisingly, the increased presence of leaders in clipped videos coincides with the higher presence of tags (90%) in posted Twitter content. The C-SPAN tweets mainly tagged a Congress member's username (@username), particularly the usernames of the House and Senate leadership.

To test Hypothesis #1, which asserts that video clipped speeches given by Congress members using more nonverbal cues will more be likely to receive engagement on Twitter than speeches that use less nonverbal cues, we estimate a set of linear regression models with the Twitter Engagement Index regressed against the Nonverbal Visual Body Language Index. Control variables, particularly those listed in Table 9.1, were included. In addition, the top three issues—immigration, corruption/ethics, and foreign policy—discussed by Congress members in the clipped video sample were included as control variables. (See Appendix 9.1 for the percentage of issues discussed.) Due to the low number of clips featuring speakers with charts or props ( $N = 15$ ), the measure for Nonverbal Floor Charts/Props is not examined as an independent variable and is thus removed from the remainder of the analysis. All fitted models were analyzed with standard goodness of fit diagnostic tests for OLS models to test for heteroscedasticity and the presence of outliers. These problems were resolved by regressing the independent and control variables on the log transformation of the dependent variable in the model.

We expected a significant, positive correlation between the index of nonverbal characteristics and the Twitter engagement index, indicating that C-SPAN clips covering Congress members employing persuasive

**TABLE 9.2** *Regression Estimates of the Visual Cues, Selected Issues, and Controls on Logged Twitter Engagement*

Total Visuals -.0242 (.100)	Web link .0629 (.207)
Clip Time .0002 (.001)	Issue—Corruption/Ethics .8367* (.303)
Female .4064 (.264)	Issue—Immigration .2205 (.276)
Leader -.2403 (.203)	Issue—Intelligence .2931 (.471)
Hashtag -.3826 (.244)	Constant 5.129 (.430)
Tag .3029 (.368)	<i>n</i> = 144
President .0182 (.234)	<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup> = .11

\**p* < .01.  
Standard errors are in parentheses.

nonverbal cues increase comments, retweets, and likes among Twitter followers (H#1). The outcome of the regression model with controls testing Hypothesis #1 is shown in Table 9.2. The main independent variable of interest in the regression model, Total Visuals, is not statistically significant nor has a substantial effect on the log of Twitter engagement index. The coefficient is also negatively signed, meaning the independent variable does not have a positive relationship with Twitter engagement as predicted in Hypothesis #1. Surprisingly, the use of nonverbal cues has a slight opposite effect on Twitter engagement. Likewise, most of the control variables had no statistically significant effect on whether viewers of tweeted C-SPAN clips engaged more with the videos.

There was one exception, however, as the regression results in Table 9.2 show that the dummy variable representing the issue of “corruption and ethical concerns” had both a strong and statistically significant relationship with Twitter engagement. This issue category made up 13% of all the clipped videos and the majority of the videos coded as corruption or ethics came out of the House of Representatives. (See Appendix 9.1.) Some of the issues discussed that were coded as corruption and ethics included debates on Russian interference in the 2016 election, whether President Trump should face impeachment, whether Environmental Protection Agency chief Scott Pruitt should be fired, and whether President Trump could pardon himself. The majority of these videos categorized as “corruption or ethics” were discussed by Democrats. Clipped videos that were categorized as “immigration” made up a larger percentage of all videos (15%) but did not have a statistically significant effect on the Twitter engagement index.

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The purpose of this research was to examine the influence of Congress member's nonverbal presentation style when they deliver their floor speeches and press conferences, particularly in the context of viewing posted C-SPAN video content via Twitter. Consistent with the literature of evaluations on presidential speechmaking (Bucy & Grabe, 2007; Bucy & Newhagen, 1999; Gong & Bucy, 2016; Shah et al., 2016), our expectation was that viewers of congressional videos on the C-SPAN Twitter page would engage more with posted video content in which members of Congress used a persuasive speaking style—smile, torso movement, and hand gestures (H#1). The empirical results shown in Table 9.2, however, suggest that visual cues used by political leaders in official speeches do not drive viewer Twitter engagement, particularly the number of likes, comments, and retweets, the same in all contexts. Previous research has stated that nonverbal behaviors in presidential speeches drove people to the “second screen” to engage with the content on Twitter (Shah et al., 2015, 2016). Other previous findings revealed that viewer evaluations of presidential debates or addresses influenced them to make higher evaluations of presidents or contenders when they speak using appropriate nonverbal behavior (Gong & Bucy, 2016; Sullivan & Masters, 1988). In contrast, our results suggest that Congress members do not need to utilize more nonverbal visual body language in the floor speeches to increase their influence on Twitter followers.

Instead of being engaged by persuasive speaking styles, viewers of C-SPAN videos on Twitter were driven more by the content of the clips than the visual cues displayed by the speaker. Despite the salience of other topics in the clipped video at the time, “corruption and ethics” had the strongest and most statistically significant relationship with the Twitter engagement index (see Table 9.2). As noted previously, speeches in this category often featured highly partisan topics, such as election security and the ethics of the U.S. president and his cabinet members. These clips overrepresented members of the Democratic Party in a currently Republican-controlled House and Senate. This may suggest that viewers who utilize Twitter for news and information on politics may be drawn to particular trending

issues, including those that have a more scandalous element to them. The lack of a significant finding for the issue of “immigration” is a surprising result, however, since this issue represented a higher percentage of clips and immigration was a highly salient issue in 2018 (Newport, 2018).

Perhaps it should be expected that @CSPAN followers are more politically interested in and engaged with political issues than nonverbal presentation style, as traditional C-SPAN viewers are more politically active than the average U.S. citizen (C-SPAN, 2017a; McDonald, 2017). Seventy percent of C-SPAN users voted in the 2016 election, as opposed to only 59% of the eligible voters in the nation (C-SPAN, 2017a; McDonald, 2017). Although this voting behavior is self-reported, the large voting discrepancy between viewers of C-SPAN content and the general population leads to the conclusion that C-SPAN viewers are more politically engaged than the public at large. The latter suggests that when members of Congress do have speeches shown on C-SPAN, they are more likely to reach those who are already politically engaged. Indeed, it is likely that both the offline and online C-SPAN audience overrepresents citizens who have an increased commitment to politics. Considering the latter, this highly interested audience likely relies on a variety of sources—both C-SPAN television and @CSPAN on Twitter—to thoroughly understand issues to form their own opinions better. Citizens may turn to the @CSPAN Twitter feed to “get the full story” or cross-check information on trending topics.

It is important to briefly conclude with research limitations as well as groundwork for future scholarship. First, we examine only one social medium platform. We do not know the extent to which the use of Twitter is associated with C-SPAN’s other social media platforms, Facebook and Instagram. Hence, we are limited to discussing only social media engagement on the Twitter platform. As previously noted, Twitter’s technical design differs from Facebook and Instagram. It could be argued that due to Twitter’s megaphone design and the short life span of tweets, posts on Twitter may receive less engagement than posts on Facebook. Moreover, Instagram, with a platform focusing predominantly on video and images, may be a better test of engagement with C-SPAN video clips. Second, the study design did not incorporate all video content provided on the C-SPAN Twitter page, thus limiting the number of observations. That is, we did

not examine clipped video of members of Congress while they were in committee proceedings, as they are usually seated and body movement is limited. We likewise did not include video that did not have one clear speaker. While other research on nonverbal communication has included eye gaze or blinks (Burgoon et al., 1990; Shah et al., 2015, 2016; Sullivan & Masters, 1988), the C-SPAN footage is mostly not at a close enough range to study this phenomenon. Third, all the video was taken from one congressional session in which both chambers were controlled by the Republican Party, which does not allow for variation in party control.

Future research should consider examining coding for speaker's expressed tone (e.g., positive, negative, or neutral) in the clipped video. Viewers of particular hand gestures or body movements may have viewed them as inappropriately exaggerated, which previous literature notes violates normative expectations and has an adverse effect on citizens (Bucy & Newhagen, 1999). Body language and hand movements could be additionally coded as agitated, intense, or aggressive. As previously noted, the presence of the negatively signed coefficient in Table 9.2, instead of the predicted positive relationship between visual cues and Twitter engagement, suggests that the tone or emotion behind visual cues may often be more negatively expressed than positive. In addition, future research should examine more than one congressional session, thereby increasing the sample size. For instance, due to our small sample, there were not enough clips of members of Congress utilizing floor charts and props to reliably test whether this additional visual cue might have an impact on engagement. Last, a controlled experiment may be needed to further investigate the causal impact of the variety of nonverbal behaviors in the clipped C-SPAN video posted on Twitter.

APPENDIX 9.1: ISSUES DISCUSSED BY HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES AND SENATE MEMBERS

Issue	Percentage
Abortion	1
Budget	7
Civil rights	1
Corruption/ethics	13
Crime/guns	6
Environment	1
Foreign policy	8
Healthcare	1
Immigration	15
Intelligence	5
Economy	3
No issue content	38

*Note:* N = 144 clips.



## APPENDIX 9.2: CODING SHEET

Coder name: \_\_\_\_\_

Tweet date and time: \_\_\_\_\_

Date coding completed: \_\_\_\_\_

<i>Twitter Engagement</i>		
Record clip “likes”		
Record number of “comments”		
Record number of “retweets”		
Record clip time in seconds		
<i>Nonverbal Body Language Cues</i>	Present (1)	Absent (0)
Smiling with either upper or upper and lower teeth showing or corners of mouth turned upwards		
Trunk/torso of body has fluid movement—arms are loose at sides or moving loosely around the torso.		
Hand gestures used		
<i>Nonverbal Floor Charts/Props</i>	Present (1)	Absent (0)
Floor chart		
Prop		
<i>Control Variables</i>	Present (1)	Absent (0)
Female speaker		
<b>Speaker is leader:</b> Speaker of the House House Majority Leader House Majority Whip House Minority Leader House Minority Whip Senate Majority Leader Senate Majority Whip Senate Minority Leader Senate Minority Whip		
Hashtag (in tweet)		
Tag (in tweet)		
President (mentioned by speaker)		
Web link (in tweet)		
Senate (clip originated in Senate or was of senator)		

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## CONCLUSION

This volume presents nine studies that use the C-SPAN Video Library as the basis for their research. As we have observed from the beginning of the C-SPAN Archives, some 30 years ago, its uses would be varied. This collection bears that observation out. While there is a common theme around President Trump's first year in office, the range of questions and methods varies substantially.

Each year, the author's use of software to analyze the video and text increases in range and sophistication. The Archives captures closed captioning text that authors use with text analysis programs to analyze. A perusal of this volume reveals a variety of software programs that the authors employ. New software is coming on line to analyze video, and we expect to see that employed in future volumes to detect the type of nonverbal cues examined by Lusvardi and Towner.

Not all of the hypotheses were substantiated by the research in this volume. That is the nature of social science: there will be as many negative results as positive results. Each advances our knowledge. A number of authors use anecdotal evidence of clips to demonstrate the phenomena they were seeking to analyze.

Each of the authors exploited features of the C-SPAN Video Library. Mentions, clips identified by a speaker and containing searched words, were the unit of analysis for Hoewe and Ziny, and Cann and Jett. All the authors used the search engine in some manner to zero in on President Trump's joint news conferences to speech references.

The goal in creating the C-SPAN Video Library was to encourage cross-disciplinary research as represented by the research in this volume. Each year we sponsor a conference and publish the proceedings. The conferences are now under the auspices of the Purdue University

Center for C-SPAN Scholarship & Engagement in the Brian Lamb School of Communication. The managing director, Connie Doebele, with the support of the School of Communication head, Marifran Mattson, has sponsored a variety of programs to support teaching and research using the C-SPAN Archives, from undergraduate research to visiting fellows to public lectures to this conference. This volume helps further that mission.



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